



BOB HARDWICK



- Mrs. G. G. G. -
1911

BOB HARDWICK

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE
AND EXPERIENCES

BY
HENRY HOWARD HARPER

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TO THE SACRED MEMORY
OF MY MOTHER

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CHAPTER I

A MOTHERLESS CHILD

MY name is Bob Hardwick. My story opens when I was nearly five years old.

It was late on a pleasant afternoon in the month of May, and clad in a checked flannel dress with a long row of round brass buttons down the front, I was picking up chips at the woodpile, when my attention was attracted by some men who were working on the road in front of our house with a large machine drawn by horses. Abandoning my task, I ran down to the fence and passed out through the gate, forgetting that I had been told not to go out of the yard,—and became deeply interested in the work going on.

Suddenly, without any warning, I was seized from behind by one ear, and a familiar voice exclaimed, "Didn't I tell you not to go out of the yard without my leave?" Then I was virtually dragged to the house—a distance of perhaps two hundred yards—where my assailant snatched up a heavy trunk strap, and slashed me several times over the back

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and shoulders. I screamed, "Oh! father, don't kill me." Old Tally, our housekeeper, came into the woodshed in response to my cries, and with a frightened scream she threw up her hands and ran out into the yard. At that moment the heavy buckle on the end of the strap struck me on the head and I dropped to the floor. Whether the beating was continued or suspended after that, I was, happily, unaware.

The next thing I remember, after the buckle struck me (how many hours or days afterward I have no means of knowing), was seeing my little sister kneeling at my bedside sobbing. At the opposite side of the bed stood a small table, on which was a glass containing some kind of colored medicine. My head was bandaged, and it seemed very heavy when I tried to raise it from the pillow. I was quite surprised to see my little sister in tears, and remember calling,—“Ala! Ala!” to her; but her only response was a convulsive quiver of the body, and she continued to weep as if her heart were broken. I recognized my old checked flannel dress hanging over the back of a chair at the foot of the bed, and my old slouch hat lay on the floor near by. Someone—a woman—I don't know who—came in quietly and gave me a spoonful of medicine—which was very bitter—and then left the room without saying a word. I was soon overcome by a feeling of drowsiness, and in a few moments fell asleep. How long I slept, or whether

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it was that day or the day after is of no consequence; but the next thing I recall was hearing heavy footsteps approaching.

The door opened, and my father stood before me glaring down at me. He was a large powerful man, over six feet tall, with a stern face, and as I looked up at him my expression must have betrayed the fear that shook me from head to foot. If the devil himself had stood there in his stead, I could scarcely have been more terrified. Whether he said anything or not I was too frightened to remember. It seemed to me that he stood there an hour, though it is doubtful if it was more than a minute, when suddenly he turned, left the room, and closed the door. I heard the lock click, and then a grating sound, as if he had taken the key out; but what his purpose was I do not know even to this day.

I looked for my little sister at the bedside, but she was not there. I endeavored to get up, but found myself unable to move. I heard someone tiptoe softly up to the door, and try the latch; then I heard my sister sobbing outside. After looking around the room for a while in a state of hopeless despair, and wondering what was to be done with me next, I began to cry; then with some sort of an instinctive fear that my father might hear me and come in and beat me again, I covered my head with the bedclothes and sobbed myself to sleep. Thus do I remember my first vivid impression of my father.

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When I awoke it was dark, and upon looking around I saw a woman seated on the opposite side of the room by a small table on which stood a lamp with a large shade. It was the same strange woman who had given me the medicine. I looked to see what she was doing, and discovered that she had my old flannel dress in her lap, and was sewing on it. I couldn't imagine what she was doing to it, because I did not know that it needed mending. She had a rather kind face, and I wondered who she was,—if she was my mother, who had been away and had returned because I was sick; then it occurred to me that I had no mother. I may say that the actual name of Mother was not in my mind, because I had perhaps never heard the name mentioned, but somehow I had an intuitive idea that some woman was responsible for my existence, and I vaguely wondered if it was she. I wondered if she were kind, and if I dared speak to her; if she would hurt me if I called to her; if she had come to protect me from my father; if she would be kind to my little sister; if she would be kind to me. She continued to sew—I could see her turning my flannel dress over and over in her lap; then her arm would straighten out at full length as she drew the thread through; then her hand would go back to the dress again; then out again. I don't know how I knew she was sewing, but I did, and I wondered if she would spoil my dress; if she would take my brass buttons off; if she would sew it up

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so I couldn't get it on. I wished that she would look up at me and smile, but she didn't. I thought she would never finish that dress. I wondered how long I should have to stay in bed ; if sick folks ever got well, or if they always died ; if I should die, what would become of my little sister, and what they would do with me ; if anyone would beat me again if I died ; if I had to be beaten again if I lived—if so, I wanted to die ; how people ever grew up to be so big ; if big people were happier than little people ; if I could have something to eat—for I was hungry ; if I dared ask that woman for something to eat ; if she would give me a drink if I asked her—for I was feverish and thirsty ; if anyone would hurt me while she was there.

With all these incoherent childish thoughts running through my muddled brain I closed my eyes and must have fallen asleep, for the next I knew my little sister was standing at my bedside with a cup—perhaps of milk—in one hand and a piece of bread, or at least some morsel of food, in the other. She had evidently roused me from my slumber. I looked for the woman, but she had gone. My sister spoke to me, but I have no recollection of what she said. I took the cup and eagerly drank its entire contents, and it had a pleasant taste—quite different from the bitter medicine. She gave me the piece of bread—or whatever it was—and it seemed that nothing ever tasted so good, either before or since.

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I must have been convalescing by this time, for the bandages had been removed from my head, though it still pained me. My sister sat down on the edge of the bed, and looked at me with such a sad and pitying expression that it frightened me. She was eight years old, and realized the sadness of the situation more than I did. After she left the room the strange woman came in and gave me another spoonful of that bitter medicine. She smiled on me and said something pleasant—I don't know what it was, but it made me momentarily happy, and I would gladly have taken the whole glass of bitter medicine had she requested it. She put out the light and closed the door as she passed out, leaving me alone in the darkness. I lay there listening to the muffled sounds of voices and footsteps from below, and again I fell to wondering about that strange woman. Who could she be? what was she there for? how long would she stay? and a hundred other mental queries.

At length the sounds died out in the rooms below, and everything became as still as death—except my brain; that was going like a train of cars, and I had no thought of sleep. I sat up in bed with my eyes wide open, staring into the darkness. The stillness of the night became agonizing; it seemed interminable. I thought if someone would only move or make a noise to break the oppressive solitude! If my little sister would only come in and lie down with me; or if somebody—anybody—

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were near so I could see or hear them, just to dispel the awful gloom and deathlike stillness! But not a whisper could I hear except the soft moaning of the tree-tops outside as they swayed back and forth in the mild breeze. It was awful; it was terrible.

At length I began to cry, at first in muffled sobs, then aloud; and, as the sound of my own voice seemed to inspire me with new courage, I cried out with all my might. Then I quieted down for a moment to see if I could hear anyone coming; and hearing no sound, except the violent throbbing in my breast, I screamed again, louder than ever, calling, "Ala! Ala! Ala! come!" I held my breath, and listened again; the silence seemed to mock my misery. I should have been willing even for my father to come in and beat me again, just for the sake of companionship.

I was frightened—the more so because no one answered my cries—I had no mother; I had no father but a huge brutal monster, as he then appeared to me; I had no friend—but my little sister, and she didn't answer my call. I wondered if they had killed her, and had all left the house. There seemed to be no one in the world but me. I was as lonesome and miserable as ever any human being on earth could be. It was the longest, loneliest, and saddest night of my life—and that is saying much, for there were many others to follow. No one will ever know—no one ever can know—

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the tortures of body and mind and soul that fell to the lot of that friendless and motherless boy on that memorable night in May. Oh, God! if my mother could have heard my voice that night, what bonds would she not have burst to reach me and press my throbbing, aching head to her breast! No wonder I remember it with a vividness that seems past human comprehension; and through all the years from that night to this day I have never heard a child cry at night without being seized with an instantaneous impulse to go to it at once; and hundreds of times when my own children were young, I have lain down on their little beds with them until they fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

MY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

OUR housekeeper—"Old Tally," we called her—was a large brawny Dutch woman with a much wrinkled face. I used to watch her trudge from the well to the house with a great tub of water poised on top of her head. She could not speak a word of English, though she understood a good deal of what we said to her. If asked a question that she understood, she would mumble some answer in her own language; but when she did not comprehend, she would utter a series of guttural sounds and shake her head. I remember that she did not like my big brother, who was continually playing tricks on her.

I can recall nothing that made any lasting impression upon me after the foregoing episode, until late one afternoon the next winter, just after a heavy fall of snow. My father had shoveled out a path to the barn, and I, having just recovered from a mild case of measles, ran out to the barn where he was milking to get a glass of warm milk. As I

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rushed into the shed the cow became startled and kicked the bucket of milk over, spilling most of the contents in his lap. He jumped up quickly, and seeing the milk running down his trousers legs and into his high boot-tops, I laughed outright. This angered him the more, and he started for me, but as he came out of the shed he tripped over the log sill and I heard the bucket slam against the ground as he fell. I turned my head as I scurried along the path and saw him sprawled out full length. I footed it for the house as hard as I could go, and running into the kitchen I cuddled close up to Tally and pulled the folds of her dress around me in my attempt to hide. Seeing my fright she probably surmised the cause, and seizing me by the arm she pushed me into the pantry and closed the door.

I stood shivering with fear, and in a moment I heard my father come bolting into the kitchen and shout, "Where's that boy?" I heard Tally grumble something, then my father went into the next room and I heard the door bang behind him. But not daring to venture out I stood still, waiting and wondering what he would do with me when he found me. Pretty soon I heard him come out into the kitchen again and ask Tally: "Did he come in here?" She mumbled something, probably that she didn't know what he said. I trembled as I heard his heavy boots coming toward the pantry, and heard him say: "He'll catch it when I find

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him." He dragged a chair up to the kitchen stove, within a few feet of where I was in hiding, and I heard the oven door open. Then I heard him grunt as he pulled off one of his boots and dropped it on the floor; and it was apparent that he was going to warm his feet by the stove, as I had sometimes seen him do before. Just then I heard him cry out with pain, and jumping up, his chair turned over on the floor; then I heard something crash against the wall on the other side of the room and rattle like tin as it bounded and rolled back across the floor.

"I'm scalded!" he shouted, and I could hear him dancing around the room with one boot on and one off.

Never in my life, before or since, did I hear a fracas that I so much wanted to see, and nothing short of the most abject fear prevented me from opening that pantry door. I heard him shout: "Pull off my boot, quick! it's full of hot water!"—then a shuffling noise, and in a moment the second boot dropped to the floor, and I heard him moan.

While Tally was busy around the stove getting supper she had—whether accidentally or by design, I cannot say—shoved the large tea-kettle full of scalding water over onto his legs, and a quantity of it ran down into his boot. His legs, and especially the one foot, were so badly burned that he was laid up in bed for many days, during which I seldom saw him, but often heard him moaning and scolding.

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One bright morning, a few months later, at the opening of the spring term, I started for school with my sister. We tramped over what then seemed to me a long distance through fields and pastures, and I was very tired—my father in after years used frequently to say that I was “born tired.”

When we arrived at the little school-house there were a lot of small boys standing around outside, all strangers to me. When I came up they tittered and tee-hee’d, perhaps because they thought I ought to be in the cradle instead of in the school-room; and before the day was over I suspect that the teacher shared their convictions.

The teacher was a patient, kind-hearted soul, and upon my arrival she took charge of me, patted me on the cheek, and very kindly showed me to my seat,—all of which pleased me immensely, for I had never before had such attentions shown me by a woman. She took pains to explain to me about “order” and “discipline” and “study,” and a few other things, all of which were new words to me and set me to wondering what sort of place I had got into.

Pretty soon I heard a bell ringing just outside the door, and in a moment the boys, large and small, all came in with a rush, tumbling over one another in their haste to get into the room. Not knowing the cause of the alarm I was much frightened and began to cry. My sister, seeing my predicament, came up and quieted me, and by this

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time most of the pupils were seated,—the girls on one side of the room and the boys on the other.

My sister started toward her seat, and I followed close behind her. Both she and the teacher remonstrated kindly with me and showed me where I was to sit, on the boys' side, but I wouldn't have it that way. Of course everyone in the school-room was looking at me, and I was much embarrassed. The teacher didn't lose her patience with me (bless her soul, I would gladly walk fifty miles to see her this very day if I knew where to find her) and eventually persuaded me to take the seat to which she had originally assigned me.

After taking my seat I looked around and wondered why everybody was so quiet. The teacher appeared to be the only one who was doing any talking. I noticed one of the boys lean over and whisper something to another boy in the seat, and concluded that he was saying something about me that he didn't want me to hear. This made me angry and I cried again. The teacher came over to me and wiped my eyes and face with her handkerchief, and spoke a few soothing words. I looked over at my sister and she frowned at me, which I interpreted to mean stop crying.

After looking around for a while I wanted to say something, but didn't know what to say or whom to say it to. Finally, not being able to restrain myself any longer, I called over to my sister, "Ala, let's go home."

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The whole school giggled, and the teacher had difficulty in restoring order. I heard her shout "Order! Order!" and remembered that was one of the things she had talked so impressively to me about.

She came over to my seat and spoke kindly to me, then she took me by the hand and led me up to her desk. She had one of the larger boys go out to the woodshed and bring in a box which she placed on the floor beside her chair—there being no other chair in the room—and lifting me she set me gently down on the box beside her.

From this advantageous viewpoint I could survey the whole school-room. Things went along nicely for a time, and every little while she would look down at me and smile, and say something pleasant. Once she said: "Are you getting tired, dear?" I made no response, not knowing what "tired dear" meant. I was tired, but "dear" was a new word to me.

After a lot of preliminary arrangements, in which I took no special interest—not knowing what it was all about—the teacher went back to the other end of the room, where I noticed she had a number of boys lined up in front of a big black board on which they were making a lot of white marks.

This interested me for a few moments, but presently my eyelids began to get heavy. Then my head drooped, and the next thing I knew I was pick-

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ing myself up off the floor, with the entire school laughing uproariously.

I was greatly frightened, and expected to get a thrashing. The teacher came hurrying up to me, but instead of punishing me she laid her hand gently upon my shoulder and said, "Are you hurt, dear?" Again I wondered what that "dear" meant.

She then moved her own chair up close to the large, flat table-like desk, and folding her coat into a comfortable pillow, she lifted me up into the chair and told me to rest my head upon the coat and go to sleep, which I did.

When she woke me it was the noon recess, and most of the pupils were seated around the room eating from tin pails and baskets. My sister came to me and asked if I was hungry, which I certainly was. She took me to her seat and we ate our luncheon from her basket. This seemed a new and strange proceeding to me. I wondered why they didn't all eat together at a big table.

After I had finished my lunch the teacher came to me and asked if I would like to go home. I said "No!" She then conversed very earnestly with my sister, and during the conversation I heard her say something about "having enough for one day," but whether it was she or I that had had enough I couldn't make out. I thought it must be she, because I hadn't had enough; indeed, I was so impressed by her kind treatment, and so refreshed by

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the nap and lunch, that I didn't feel as if I cared ever to go back home.

However, it was decided that my sister should take me home, and when I saw her putting on her coat and bonnet I howled and danced around her and tried to pull her coat off. The teacher came up to me, put her arms around me tenderly and said a lot of nice things about my being such a good little boy, and how I could come back tomorrow, but I suspected that she was trying to get rid of me, and between sobs I told her that I would be good. I promised not to cry any more ; not to fall off the box again, nor talk out loud, and in fact would do nothing but what she told me to do.

She opened her desk and gave me a little black doll-baby,—the first toy I had ever seen. It had the instant effect of drying my tears, and I carried it tightly gripped in my hand, dancing joyfully every step of the way home.

That night I went to bed filled with the pleasant anticipation of going to school next day. In a state of ecstasy at finding someone who seemed to take an interest in me, I lay awake a long while pondering over the happenings of the day. I wrapped my little naked black doll up in an old stocking, fearing that it would get away; then, thinking it might smother, I unwrapped it and put in under my pillow. I wondered if my father would let me keep it. Several times I put my hand under my pillow to see if it was still there. How different were my

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thoughts from those of nearly a year ago! Again and again I puzzled over what the teacher meant in calling me "dear"; and each successive attempt to fathom the mystery brought me to the same conclusion, that it must mean something nice, because she was kind-hearted. I endeavored to recall the many names that my father and big brother had called me, but none of them sounded like "dear."

I couldn't get my mind away from that teacher; it seemed that in her rested my hope. I wondered if she were anything like my mother—if she would take me and my sister to live with her, and thought how happy we could be; how happy a home would be wherever she was! I wondered if she were vexed at me for crying and acting so badly. I was so angry that I felt like pinching myself for crying before her and the whole school; and I solemnly determined to do better tomorrow and thus restore myself in her good graces. Would she forgive me, and put her arms around me again? What a joyous thought! It thrilled me with delight, and I was seized with an impulse to jump out of bed and dress and sit up all night so as to be in readiness for an early start next morning.

It seemed as if morning would never come. I began to feel drowsy, and not wishing to go to sleep, I shook myself and opened wide my eyes to keep awake so I could think more, and more, and more; for the more I thought, the happier I became.

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There appeared to be a vital spark somewhere within me that had been quickened into a veritable flame, and I was all of a tremble with excitement.

At length my eyelids slowly closed and I felt myself gradually and peacefully slipping away into dreamland surrounded by a galaxy of pleasant vagaries that danced gleefully before my childish vision.

CHAPTER III

ABOUT MY FATHER

MY father was an instructor in higher mathematics and physical science at some educational institution in the town, which was about three miles distant. In summer, during vacation season, he was at home much of the time, and it was seldom pleasant when he was about. The atmosphere seemed oppressive, and a Sunday-like stillness pervaded the premises, excepting for his tirades and vociferations which could be heard at frequent intervals throughout the day, and often well into the night. He was seldom still during his wakeful hours, except when reading or writing, and at these times everyone in the household had to suspend all audible communication and resort to whispers and signs. When not reading or writing he was singing or scolding, usually the latter. He would sing when alone and scold when anyone was around. He scolded a great deal about wastefulness, and would say: "Save everything—throw nothing away, for some day you will come to want."

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It seemed always to make him miserable and cross to see his children enjoy themselves, or laugh in childish fashion. A peal of merry laughter in the household never failed to rankle in his breast. It may be said, however, that he was not given frequent occasion for provocation by this transgression.

And strangely enough, too, when he was in good humor he would discourse at length upon the beauties of a happy and tranquil home, and ten minutes later he would, as likely as not, thrash some one of us for "giggling and tee-heeing," as he was wont to call it. A singular feature of his anomalous disposition was that, although stern and harsh toward his own children, he was generally kind and sympathetic with the children of others.

He was sanctimonious to the last degree, and never used profane language, except an occasional epithet while in an ungovernable rage. He never permitted a particle of liquor or tobacco in the house, and took good care to see that his children did not use them on the sly. Dances, theater-going, card-playing, novel-reading and all other similar diversions were particularly abhorrent to him. We never to my knowledge had a party or gathering of any sort at home—indeed, we never had a permanent home for very long at a time after I became six years of age—and I do not recall that anybody outside of the family circle ever sat at table with us. If ever I heard of Christmas Day before arriving at the age of ten, I have no recollection of when or un-

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der what circumstances it was brought to my notice — certainly not by any gift or cheerful greeting.

While under my father's control he never allowed me to attend any school other than that of his own teaching (except the three months' term previously mentioned), because, he said, promiscuous association with the children at the public schools was likely to corrupt and undermine the moral constitution. He would often repeat the old exhortation, "Spare the rod and spoil the child"; upon which he placed, and practised, the most literal and liberal interpretation. He began early to "conquer" me, as he was wont to call it, for he often related with much gusto and satisfaction how he set about and accomplished this wonderful feat the next night after my mother died, when I was but eight months old, by "laying it on good and heavy," until I *stopped crying!*

He used to say that he had always been known as a "strict disciplinarian," and nobody within my hearing ever denied him that designation. He always seemed to hold himself aloof from his neighbors and never formed close friendships or associations. He was continually preaching: "Have a place for everything, and everything in its place, so you can go straight to it in the middle of the night." But I often wondered why it was that he never could find anything he was looking for, even in the middle of the day, without turning things topsy-turvy in the house. When he was

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late getting started to town he would shout—*"Where's my hat?"* whereupon everyone in the household would fall to in the search, excepting old Pete—our cat—and if he happened to be anywhere within range, he would look wildly about for the nearest exit, and hastily decamp.

I always dreaded to see my father shave, for this seemed especially to irritate him. He would lather his face, and then, as if possessed of some satanic impulse, would often strike out through the house like a mad bull, kicking at chairs and everything that crossed his way, exclaiming: "I swow, if it don't beat the Old Harry—not one of my children will mind a single word I say!" How well I remember this favorite saying of his, which I have heard him repeat word for word, hundreds and hundreds of times, always with emphasis on the "swow,"—whatever that meant. Then having thus vented his spleen, he would return to his shaving, and perhaps by the time he got half through he would think of something else to berate someone about, and away he would go again storming through the house with one half of his face shaved and the other half lathered, giving orders and scolding about things that had been done and things that had not been done. The operation of removing his beard seemed to rouse his ire more than anything else, and we always made it a point, when possible, to have something to do outside while this job was going on.

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I recall how time and again when working or playing out of doors, and I wanted to go into the house for something, I would creep cautiously up to the kitchen door, press my ear against the keyhole and hold my breath while I listened intently to find out if I could hear his voice inside. If all was still I would timidly venture in; but if I could hear him scolding in any part of the house—and I usually could—I would scurry away and wait for things to calm down. Once while leaning against the door, listening to know if it were safe to enter, he opened the door suddenly, and I sprawled headlong across the threshold at his feet. He was so startled that he forgot to thrash me.

Perhaps, however, we are inclined to remember the disagreeable things in life with more vividness than the pleasurable ones, for the latter are generally a presupposed heritage, and the former, being out of the ordinary run of natural expectations, create more lasting impressions. I like to think so at least, and to imagine that I had a lot of fun that I have forgotten about. My father often remarked that "Fun kills people," and he always took good care not to let me get enough of it to make me even mildly ill.

Yet, with all his faults, there still lurked somewhere within him a stifled trace of human kindness which occasionally found expression in pleasant words and kind acts. He was generous in providing such necessities as came within his modest

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means, and never permitted himself to enjoy any individual pleasure or comfort that was denied his family. His children were always provided with better clothes than he himself wore, and when at times he brought fruits or other delicacies into the house they were equally distributed among the children, while he took none whatever for himself. Once when in a sunny mood he placed me astride his neck and shoulders and carried me about the place, telling me stories of his schoolboy days. He asked me if I would carry him around like that when he "grew little and I grew big."

He had a massive, well-proportioned head, with a heavy growth of coal-black hair, and his face in repose was not unpleasant to look upon. He possessed an inexhaustible fund of information upon historical subjects, though mathematics, physics, and trigonometry were his especial hobbies. He could recite and give the correct solution of every example in Ray's Mental Arithmetic, and instantly tell the page on which any named problem could be found. Before I was six years old he had taught me to pronounce and spell the name of every article in the house, and to give the different sounds of all the vowels.

A native of Vermont, his boyhood days were spent among the hills of that State, and when on our travels he answered the oft-repeated inquiry as to the place of his nativity, he was always proud to say: "I'm a Yankee, born and bred, from the old

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‘Green Mountain’ State.” Once I heard a man refer to him as a “damn Yankee”; and after that I often wondered what it meant, and if it applied also to me. At the age of eighteen he received a first-class teacher’s certificate, a fact of which he was justly proud.

His roving disposition never permitted him to enjoy prosperity or to remain in any one place very long at a time after my mother’s death. He rarely contracted a debt, and never within my knowledge ran an open account,—not even at a grocery store.

His sovereign virtue was his idolatrous reverence for the memory of my mother. I have heard him say that his last spark of hope and ambition had expired with her, and that he should never marry again because there was no other woman who could approach his ideal, so beautifully and amply typified in her. He often spoke of her singular beauty and her personal virtues, but never referred to her family—because, I presume, as I later discovered, they objected to her matrimonial alliance with him.

Possessed of these sharply contrasting traits, his unusual character was a compound of the best and the worst in human nature,—the latter quality generally predominating.

CHAPTER IV

I AM A COLLECTOR — OF RUSTY NAILS

DURING the three months that I attended school my thoughts and hopes were centered on my teacher. She often asked me to share her lunch with her, and upon these occasions she talked kindly to me during much of the noon hour. Once during the summer she called to see me, and upon seeing her approach I fairly danced for joy. On taking her leave she gave me a new silver ten-cent-piece, the first money I ever owned. I promised that I would surely come to school as soon as it opened in the fall, and was sorry they didn't have school all summer, just so I could be with her.

I did not much enjoy that summer. My father made me work most of the time, and if he could think of nothing else for me to do he would scatter beans, or chips, or something else, around and set me at work picking them up. He seldom gave me permission to leave the yard, and every time he caught me outside, or even heard of my having been outside while he was away, he thrashed me.

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Upon leaving the house he would call me to him and enumerate perhaps a dozen or more things that I was *not* to do while he was away; then he would usually close by saying: "Oh, thunderation! don't do anything but what I tell you to do!"

I was practically a prisoner within a two-hundred-yard limit of the house. In the front my boundary line was the picket fence; on one side, a large oak tree; on the other side, a row of apple-trees, and in the back, the old shed behind the barn. I was allowed no playmates, and the neighbors' children were not permitted inside the bounds described.

Excepting when my sister was with me, I worked and played alone, always improvising my own play-things and methods of amusement,—consisting chiefly of making sun-baked clay marbles and mud pies, and collecting rusty nails. The long nails I called the "cow nails," the stubs or broken nails, the "bull nails," and the small nails, the "calves"; all installed in separate pens. The mud pies were all that my cattle had to eat. I would stick a lot of the nails into a mud pie and leave them over night to "fatten," as I called it; then early next morning I would run out and put them into a cup of water to "drink."

When I saw my father coming home in the afternoon—and this was an event upon which I kept pretty close watch—I would seize my tin cup and set to picking up beans, or snatch up my basket

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and go to picking up chips,—whichever he had told me to do upon his departure. He appeared satisfied if I was alone and working at his departure and upon his return without questioning what results I had accomplished during the day; but he usually inquired if I had obeyed his injunction not to leave the yard. It was on the days when he stayed at home that I was most unhappy, for he nearly wore himself out keeping me busy, and he nearly wore me out if I didn't keep busy.

Upon going into the kitchen one afternoon when he was away I found my brother mixing some dough, which he said was for biscuits. I asked him for some of it to make a little biscuit for myself, and he promised it to me if I would get an armful of kindling wood with which to start a fire in the cook stove.

Having often amused myself for hours making mud pies and cakes, the promise of some real biscuit dough pleased me greatly; so I hurried out to the woodpile and soon returned with a load of kindling-wood and chips; then stood for a moment awaiting the fulfillment of his promise.

He took out a large handful—much more than I had any hope of getting—and putting one hand on the back of my head, with the other he slapped the soft, mushy substance square into my face and rubbed it all over thoroughly, with the remark, "There's your dough." It blinded me completely, until I dug it out from over my eyes.

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Leaving the house without saying a word, I ran to a clump of timber a few hundred yards away, to wait until my father should return home. Once I looked back and saw my brother standing in the door looking after me, and still laughing; but I was not so crazy as he perhaps supposed, for I knew that if I could only keep that dough on my face until my father saw it, my revenge would be swift and sure. The one thing I feared most was that it would not stay on until he got home; but it soon began to dry and harden, and then I feared it would never come off !

I hid behind a brush heap near the roadside, and passed two hours about as uncomfortably as anyone could wish. Having a painful memory of several personal encounters with my father I trembled to think what might happen to my brother; and several times I was on the point of relenting; but the thought of my brother's ingratitude renewed my courage. There was little doubt that I, too, should get a good whaling, but I was willing to take mine, in the hope that his would be twice as hard.

At last my patience and discomfort were rewarded, for I saw my father coming up the road from town, and I crouched down closer behind the brush pile. After he had passed and gone a safe distance I followed him along the road and reached the house a little behind him.

As I marched in I met my brother coming out. Catching hold of me he started to drag me into the

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kitchen to wash my face, and on the way we bumped square into the "old man," as we sometimes called him. I well remember his expression as he looked at my face. Had he possessed a hundredth part of a grain of humor he would have collapsed in a paroxysm of laughter; but instead his face flushed with fury as he looked from one to the other. He looked so savage that I became alarmed, and was about to explain that I had been playing with some dough, when suddenly turning to my brother, he said: "That's some of your work!" and catching him by the collar took him out to the woodshed—familiarly known in the household as "the old man's study"—perhaps for the reason that he used it more than any room in the house.

I immediately took a walk out to the barn, and on my way stopped at the well and washed my face. After thinking matters over penitently for a time I started back to the house, having decided that it would be better to take my medicine in season so as to have it over with before supper, but for some reason my father disappointed me—a thing he never did again, as far as my memory serves me. I frequently got thrashings that I didn't anticipate, but never afterward did I expect one that I didn't get.

My brother never quite forgave me for my "cuteness," as he called it, about the dough episode, although he pretended to have forgotten it. He later set a number of traps for my discom-

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future, but most of them miscarried, or were sprung prematurely, or in some way failed of the desired results, often through the kind mediation of Old Tally.

One day, a few weeks later, while Tally was out in the garden, I was playing out in the back yard, and on going to the house I found all the doors locked. My father had gone to town, and a short time before I had seen my brother enter the house; so I concluded he was inside, probably hiding my clay marbles or doing something else which he didn't wish me to know about.

He rigged up a platform over the front door inside, and placed upon it a large dishpan and a water bucket, both filled with water, two chairs, a lot of old tin cans and bottles,—all arranged in such a way that when the door opened the whole medley would tumble down onto the head of the unsuspecting victim. In addition, he had tied the cat to the bail of an empty tin water bucket, putting him inside, with a heavy board over the top.

Having completed the job to his satisfaction, he came to the back door and called: "Bob, come 'round to the front door; someone in the front room wants to see you." Wondering who it could be, I ran around to the front and was much surprised to see my father—who had returned home unexpectedly—hurrying up the front steps. Supposing that somebody was waiting in the house to see me, I followed close behind him as he opened the door.

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He pushed it wide open, following it as it swung in, and the whole conglomeration came down on him with a crash. The cat, seeing the open door, lunged out past him, dragging the empty bucket bumpity-bump down the steps, and with a frightened "m-e-o-u!" the cat and bucket bounded down through the front yard, and, leaping through an opening in the fence, the cat broke loose from the bucket as it caught between the pickets, and disappeared into the thicket beyond the road.

As far as I could see, not a thing went wrong with the arrangement, for everything seemed to land on top of my father's head. After the clatter was over I heard him say: "*I swow!* What's all this?" A moment later my brother opened the door leading from the next room, holding both hands on his sides to keep from splitting with laughter. If I could accurately reproduce the picture of his face showing the quick transformation upon seeing my father standing amidst the debris, I should never need work another day of my life.

CHAPTER V

LEAVING THE OLD HOME

ALL through the summer, following my first experience in school, I cheered myself with the comforting thought that I should return to school—or rather to my teacher—when the fall term began, and I impatiently counted the days and weeks as they crept slowly by.

At last it came to within one week of the long-looked-for event, and I was in high glee, having stored up in my mind a great number of things to say to my teacher, which in telling would require at least a week of steady talking.

But my fond hopes were all dispersed when my father upon returning home late one night informed us that the home was to be broken up and that we were to move away; that is, he and I were to move away, while my brother was to be let out to work for a neighbor, and arrangements had been made for my sister to attend school in town, where she was to make her home with the owner of the place where we then lived,—a wealthy but lonely and childless widow.

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My despondency at leaving my teacher and sister—all in the world I held dear—and going away—I knew not and cared not where—alone with my father, can better be imagined than described. Although the scene of much unhappiness, the old homestead seemed very dear to me, especially when it came to the point of leaving it—perhaps forever.

The rope swing that hung from a strong limb of the old elm-tree; the shady plot beneath its branches worn smooth and bare of grass by frequent use as a playground, where I had made mud pies and “fatted” my rusty-nail cattle; the old shed behind the barn, where I housed my “cattle” when it rained, and where after a severe thrashing I used to resort and, burying my face in my hands, lean my head up against the rough boards and cry and kick the cross-beam at the bottom, and wish that I were dead; the well, under a large elm-tree out back of the house, with the old moss-covered windlass, where on a hot day I used to quench my thirst from the old wooden bucket; the faithful old “bench-legged” yellow dog—Shirley—my loving and faithful companion, who used to follow sadly after me when I went to the old shed to cry, and seemed to sympathize with me, for he would lie down and lick my bare feet and whine plaintively,—these were objects and associations which made the place dear to me.

Within a few days the cow, the pigs, the hens, and even the dog and cat, were all taken away,



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and preparations for moving were rapidly approaching completion. The lady with whom my sister was going to live in town came out in her carriage to take her away. She was beautifully dressed in black, and seemed very lovable and motherly, all of which she afterward proved to be.

The scene at parting with my sister must have been tragic. I danced, and howled, and rolled upon the ground, and pulled at her dress, and tugged at the carriage wheels, trying to break them; and finally climbed up into the carriage, determined to go along too. My sister sobbed, the woman wept, and I screamed, while my father stood by as mute and apathetic as a Boeotian sphinx. The woman said it was a pity to separate us, and that she would gladly take me along too, and give me a good home; but my father would not hear to it. He clutched me by the arm and dragged me out of the carriage and into the house, where he thrashed me for cutting up such "monkey-shines," as he called them. As a finale in the parting scene my sister saw my struggling form being dragged to the house, realizing only too well what awaited me there. I did not see her again for many years.

My brother had already gone, but upon the occasion of his departure the obsequies were comparatively simple and free from tears.

It would be a useless repetition of harrowing and heartrending experiences further to describe my lacerated and lonesome feelings at the final

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parting and during that night and the next day. Suffice it to say that I got through it all in some way, and am still living to tell the tale.

The next afternoon "Old Nellie," as we called her (a fine large bay mare), was hitched up to the wagon, and after loading on such things as my father thought we should need,—including three large cases of books, which he declared to be his "library," two chairs, bedding, boxes filled with dishes, cooking utensils, and a general accumulation of all sorts of unnecessary odds and ends,—we climbed up onto the load and bade good-by to the house and surroundings as we moved slowly away down the road and over the prairies beyond.

The solemnity of this scene made a lasting impression upon my childish mind; indeed, I can think of no incident in my early life that stands out more clearly before my remembrance than the sensations experienced on that gloomy September afternoon.

It seems to me that from the time we drove out at the front gate until the buildings gradually glimmered away in the distance—perhaps a little more than a mile—I entertained more thoughts than could be recorded in the longest book ever printed. I was perched up on top of the load, facing the rear end of the wagon, and never once relinquished my steady gaze at the old place until the haze in the distance obscured it from my view.

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It seemed that every thought and every hope that ever I had cherished rose up within my breast and struggled for recognition. I was too sad to weep—it was too overpowering for tears. No matter what of sadness had been associated with it, it was nevertheless my home—the only home I had ever known—and as such it was precious to me. I thought of my sister, my teacher, my dog, my playground; they were now left behind, one and all, perhaps never to be seen again.

Now, at the parting hour, only the pleasant objects and recollections were foremost in my reveries, and scarcely an unpleasant memory darkened my mental vision. And to think that not a solitary soul or object that I loved was there to say good-by! Not even Old Tally, who had been sent away nearly a week before our departure!

We simply crawled away quietly; and the home, with all its surroundings and memories, was left lonely and deserted in the dark recesses of solitude as it slowly faded away in the distance. Then my heart seemed to sink within me and the heavens appeared overcast with an awful gloom.

CHAPTER VI

A JOURNEY OF TORMENTS

WHEN we first began traveling I had a singular idea regarding the size of the world. Prior to that time the school-house was the farthest I had ever been from home, and somehow I felt that the school and my home were at the two extreme points of the earth.

I well remember that as soon as I began to recover from my melancholy, after getting out of sight of the old home, I glanced ahead at the distant horizon and thought that at least we could not go very far, because it was only a short distance to the edge of the world. But soon I wondered why it was that we kept going and going, yet never reached the jumping-off place. In traveling over the open, undulating country, when we came to the crest of an elevation I would look far ahead across the valley to the next rise and think that surely when we reached that we should be at the other side of the world, and should have to turn back, or off to one side. And I vaguely won-

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dered what would happen if, perchance, we should drive too far and slide over the edge.

Then when I looked back and saw the junction of the sky with the earth's surface behind us I wondered if the world was moving along with us, or if we were traveling along in a chain of worlds; for I was sure I could see the outer edge on all sides. I asked my father about it, but he made no reply, and for a long time I was much puzzled. Then I began to wonder how people could travel and know where they were going, or how to get anywhere; and was much disturbed for fear I should never learn how to reach a given point. Sometimes my father would stop at a house to make some inquiry, and I feared that we were lost and should never find our way. The people of whom he made inquiries would point first in one direction, then in another, and they didn't appear to know our bearings any better than he did. Occasionally we turned and retraced our steps, and this invariably gave me a thrill of delight, for I hoped we might by some chance get back home.

We had not proceeded far on our journey before it became evident that the load was too heavy; so a part of it was stored at some farm-house along the way; and it may be there still for aught that I know.

We traveled steadily for fourteen months, with only an occasional intermission of a day, or perhaps a week, to permit the horse to rest,—through

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heat and cold, rain and shine,—and it appeared to me that we went around all the worlds, and back again. I was much astonished at the size of the earth. We passed through Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and up into Michigan, making a complete circuit; then back down through Indiana, Illinois, and into Missouri. And I have the unenviable, and I hope unique, distinction of having been soundly thrashed in every one of those twelve states before I was eight years of age.

We called on a number of my father's relatives in different localities—among them two brothers and two sisters. I was not much impressed with my uncles, but my two aunts were kind and motherly. I discovered that the most prosperous of his brothers was not on speaking terms with him, so we drove haughtily past his door without going in to inquire after his health. He had a beautiful large house, with ample grounds, and was at that time living comfortably in retirement.

We must have crossed the Missouri and Mississippi twenty times, nearly always in ferry-boats. We crossed on the ferry at Nebraska City before any bridge was built, and traveled over the barren, homeless prairies for many days. I remember there were great flocks of prairie chickens along the way, and when we stopped for lunch at mid-day they would swarm around us at a safe dis-

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tance, hoping to pick up crumbs or grain after our departure.

Twenty years later I went over practically the same district in Nebraska, and found it laid out in beautiful farms with dwellings on nearly every quarter- or half-section.

What possessed my father to take me and that load with him all over twelve states, through mud-holes, swamps and snow-drifts, over mountains, fording streams—often swollen so the horse almost had to swim with the load,—on and on, through rain and hail, sleet and snow, in night time and day time, on weekdays, and sometimes on Sundays, as if we were fleeing from the wrath to come, was, and still is, incomprehensible to me. The demon of unrest seemed to possess him. It is one of the riddles in life for which I can offer neither solution nor parallel.

The country roads in those days were quite different from what they are today, and there were but few bridges. In many places they were merely trails through the wildernesses and over the prairies; often leading through great marshes for miles with no sign of civilization or habitation. We must have unloaded and reloaded the wagon a hundred times in getting out of quagmires and over other bad places; and sometimes in wet weather the horse could scarcely get through with the empty wagon. On two or three occasions my father walked several miles to the next habita-

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tion to get a man and team to help get our load through.

Many nights when we slept out in the woods, we were lulled to sleep by the melancholy notes of the whippoorwill. In answer to my inquiry as to what sort of an animal made that weird noise, my father said it was a great winged monster with a long sharp beak, and that it was very fond of pecking out the eyes of bad boys. I have since wondered if this was the origin of my habit of sleeping with my face down, for I well remember that thereafter I always slept with my face buried in my pillow, so that awful bird couldn't peck my eyes out; for my father had often told me that I was a very naughty and "good-for-nothing" boy, and I thought surely this bird would be after me.

When camping out on the prairie we frequently heard the shrill bark or cry of wolves, sometimes on all sides of us, but they never molested us, except that once while we were asleep under the wagon they climbed up into it and carried off our supply of meat.

In cold weather we usually spent the night at farm-houses along the road, and many days when it was very cold and the snow was deep we did not make much headway; but we always kept moving along at a snail's pace. In cold weather I usually walked to keep warm.

What purpose or objective point my father had in view nobody ever knew, not even himself. He

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had nothing to sell, was looking for nothing in particular, and had no apparent motive except to wander aimlessly along and see how far he could go before his money gave out. People used to ask him where he was going, and they always appeared to be puzzled when he answered that he did not know.

I particularly remember one chilly night late in October, when we had traveled until long after dark—as we frequently did, for in some sections the farm-houses were far apart—we stopped at a house and inquired if we could stay over night. Two men came out to the wagon with a lantern and looked the load over curiously. One of them asked the familiar question: “What air ye peddlin’?” to which my father in turn made the customary and abrupt reply: “Nothing—this is my *library*.” “Whar air ye goin’?” was the next inquiry.

“Nowhere—I don’t know”; which was the usual reply, for these questions always provoked him. The men perhaps thought—and possibly not without good reason—that he was some crazy man, carting his “library” around in a wagon, and going “nowhere,” so one of them said: “Wa’al, I guess ye’d better move on and keep a-goin’ till ye git thar.” So without further ado we continued our journey in the dark, and after going a mile or so, and seeing no light in the distance ahead, we camped in the woods—and I nearly froze to death.

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Many times we "pushed on," as my father used to call it, through a drenching rain and, unless we came to a town or house, lay down in the wagon to sleep at night without a dry stitch of clothing.

It is a singular fact that during all the hardships and exposures of that journey of torments I suffered no illness, except once as the result of an accident that occurred while fleeing before a great prairie fire.

On one occasion we were "pushing along" after dark and came into Red Oak, Iowa, in the early part of the night. We stopped in front of a little store, with brilliantly lighted windows. I sat huddled up in the wagon with a blanket over my head, while my father went in search of something,— I don't know what. The rain had slackened and a lot of boys came down the street and, stopping in front of me, they began to hoot and laugh. If ever there was anything that vexed me it was to have anybody laugh at my predicaments; and although I realized that this was a mirth-provoking spectacle, it did not mitigate my feelings in the least.

Just then a man came out of the store and said something to the boys which caused them to disperse. He came up to me and asked me if I was wet.

"Yes," I said.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes."

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Then he asked me if I would like to have a dish of ice cream. Having no idea what it was, I said, "I don't know."

"Well, come on in and try some," said he; so throwing off the wet blanket I crawled down from the wagon and scampered in behind him. He went back to the rear of the building, and I stood there looking about in a state of speechless wonder. He soon returned with a dish filled with a white frozen substance and a large piece of cake. I devoured them with the avidity of a hungry wolf. When I had finished and looked up at the man, who stood by contemplating my appreciation of this gastro-nomic treat, my grateful acknowledgment must have shown in my face; but at that moment I was startled by hearing my father's voice calling to me, and bounding across the room, I ran out at the front door without saying "Thank you," "Good-by," or anything else. I did not mind the punishment I got out on the sidewalk half so much as I should have minded missing that dish of ice cream.

Hundreds of times in after years I have thought of that treat. How little it cost the man, and how much it meant to me, both then and as an object lesson later in life! It was perhaps the most profitable dish of ice cream and cake that ever he disposed of.

During the long journey I saw many children at the various houses where we stopped, and envied them in their happy homes, with fond mothers and

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fathers. It appeared as if there was no one in the whole world who was quite as miserable and homeless as I was. I often wondered if ever I should have a home like other little boys, with someone to mend my clothes and care for me.

CHAPTER VII

CAMPING AT NIGHT—THE RICHMOND CYCLONE

IN selecting a camping place for the night it was my father's custom, when possible, to locate by some stream of water, and we never camped out on the open prairie if there was any chance of reaching a timbered section by nightfall. By the middle of the afternoon we would begin casting about for a likely place of lodgment for the night, and in hot weather we found it more comfortable camping in the woods than sleeping in the hot, stuffy rooms of the average farm-house.

If at any time late in the afternoon we saw an exceptionally promising spot we stopped and pitched our camp rather than take any chances farther along. It was always my duty upon these occasions to collect dry leaves and sticks for the fire, while my father would take the ax and cut two forked sticks and a cross-bar on which to hang the kettle in cooking the meal. At the same time he would cut some small boughs for our bed, and while he was starting the fire I used to drag the

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brush in and place it under the wagon, and pull out the bedding.

A few days after leaving Nebraska City we camped in a clump of woods one night on the bank of a wide, shallow stream. The channel was deep, and showed that at times a considerable body of water flowed along its course. It was perhaps a hundred feet up a steep incline from the water to the point where we camped, on a small level plot which lay at the base of a large bluff. It was an ideal spot for a camp,—surrounded on all sides by heavy timber.

It was our practice to “stake the horse” if there was any grass; otherwise she was tied to the back end of the wagon and fed grain and hay from the long feed-box attached to the rear. At this particular place there was no grass, so Old Nellie was made fast to the wagon.

After we got the fire started the old black iron kettle was brought out, filled with water, and suspended from the horizontal stick supported by two crotched stakes over the fire. One of my numerous duties was to keep a basin of water by me, and see that this cross-stick didn't catch fire and burn in two, thus letting the kettle of water and contents down into the flames. Oftentimes I fell asleep before the fire, while my father was feeding the horse, or making the bed, or attending to some other duty, and was suddenly awakened by the kettle with our supper falling into the fire.

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On the night in question, after finishing our meal of potatoes, eggs, and bacon, with crackers and cheese for dessert, we repaired to our bed underneath the wagon. A thunder shower came up in the night and my father got up and spread the oil-cloth covers over the things in the wagon.

The lightning flashed almost incessantly, and two or three times it struck near by. At length a terrific bolt struck a large tree at the base of the bluff very near the wagon, and the splinters and dead limbs rained down all about us. The horse gave a lunge, and jerking the end of the wagon around, horse, wagon, and all started off down the bank, leaving us lying there in the rain without any shelter. Jumping up my father yelled, "Whoa! whoa, there, Nellie!" but neither the horse nor the wagon paid any attention to him, and before he could reach them they both landed with a crash in the stream below.

He ran down and in the glare of the lightning I could see him struggling with the frightened horse. It was a weird scene pictured there in the quickly alternating flashes of light and darkness. After regaining her feet, the horse plunged about in the shallow water, and finally, breaking away, she started off, with a loud snort, galloping through the woods. My father shouted to me, "*Head her off there!*" but I couldn't see how I was going to head her off when she was already "off" at a safe distance, and running in the opposite direction.

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The wagon, having turned over when it went down the abrupt little embankment at the water's edge, lay squarely upside down in the pebbly river-bed, and some of the smaller articles had floated on down-stream. Presently the thunder and lightning ceased, it set in raining in earnest, and the blackness of the night became intense. I stood there in the pouring rain listening to my father—though now I couldn't see a thing—as he splashed about in the shallow water, and grunted and tugged away at the wagon. Every little while I could hear him—"Humph!" and say to himself: "I swow, if this don't beat the Old Harry!" I thought so too.

Once he said: "Horse gone, and no light"—for the candles were all under the load in the bed of the stream. Again I heard him say: "Now, that plaguy horse is gone and she'll never come back!" and again I silently agreed with him, for it was not clear to me why she should. It continued to pour and my clothes were soaking wet. The humorous side of the predicament didn't strike me very forcibly at the time, but in after years I have thought of it a great many times.

After working half an hour or so my father decided to suspend operations until daylight. He managed to recover a piece of oil-cloth, and making our way back to our bed we got through a wakeful night. Early the next afternoon he found the horse grazing at the edge of the woods more than a mile off, and soon afterward we were again on

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our way; but it was a sorry and bedraggled-looking outfit. Stopping at the first house, which we reached late in the night, we applied for lodging; and after hearing of our plight the kind housewife got up out of bed and prepared a good supper for us,—the first warm meal we had had for more than twenty-four hours. We spent three or four days there drying things out and making preparations for continuing our journey.

Many of my father's precious books were soaked with water, and for the first and last time in my life I saw a library hung out on a clothes-line to dry.

Early one hot afternoon—it was on the first of June—we drove into Richmond, Missouri, and hitched the horse at the public square, in the center of which stood the court house. A row of hitching-posts, extending entirely around the large, grassy yard, was loosely strung with a long chain, having four openings for passageway, one on each side. The principal stores of the town faced the court house on the four streets bordering the square.

It may have been Saturday—I don't remember—for there were a great number of horses hitched around the square, and on the streets were many people. Leaving me to guard the wagon, my father went to the stores to procure supplies, and when he returned, as he was untying the horse he craned his neck around, looking in all directions

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toward the heavens, saying, "Looks like rain." It was very sultry, and I was wishing it would do something,—almost anything. We started out of town, but by the time the suburbs were reached heavy clouds were gathering, and the wind blew the dust in eddies all around us.

We stopped, and after another survey of the elements overhead my father hesitated a few moments, debating whether to return or go on. By this time it had begun to sprinkle a little; the wind had ceased blowing, and the atmosphere became transformed from a condition of bluster to a state of sudden calm and humid stillness.

Suddenly catching me by the arm my father shouted, "Look ! look !" and looking off in the direction he was pointing I saw a great, dark funnel-shaped cloud, so much darker than the other clouds that its outlines were clearly discernible. It appeared to be headed directly toward us. Hastily jumping out my father grabbed me and ran to the nearest house, leaving the horse standing untied in the road. I was much frightened by his sudden alarm and couldn't imagine why he should run from a cloud, even such an ominous one as that.

Arriving at the front door of the house he set me down and pounded vigorously on it with both hands. A woman opened it and, catching me up, my father rushed in past her, shouting, "*Cyclone! cyclone!* run for the cellar." The tranquil household was

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immediately thrown into a state of wild disorder, and gathering up her four children — one a young babe—the woman headed the way to the cellar door, which led down from the kitchen.

By this time it had grown quite dark, and outside there was a terrible rushing and roaring sound, as if the whole town were being swept over our heads. With the babe in her arms the woman ran down the cellar steps, followed closely by the other children.

As she passed down she screamed back, "*Look out for the step!*" but, without knowing what she meant, I rushed through the cellar door after her into the darkness below, and as I put my foot down for the first step, which was missing, I tumbled headlong down the stairs and into the children ahead. My father was not long in following suit, and as he came lumbering down the steps, landing at the bottom all in a heap, I thought surely the cyclone had blown the house down on us. As we were getting up and disentangling ourselves there in the darkness I heard my father grunt, and say: "I swow, if it don't beat all!"

We all stood trembling, unable to see one another, and expecting at every moment that the house would come crashing down on our heads. For a few minutes no one spoke, and the stillness was broken only by the cries of the frightened infant and the wind outside. At length my father ventured up the steps, and soon called down to us—"It's all over."

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As I came up the steps I felt along for the place where the step was missing.

We passed out into the yard and found that the roof had been partly blown away and the framework of the house was badly twisted out of shape. My father went in search of the horse and wagon, but returned later without finding either.

Accompanied by two of the larger children we started toward the center of the town and soon came upon great heaps of wreckage in the streets. Shade trees had been literally pulled up by the roots and carried a distance of several hundred feet.

Upon reaching the place where the storm center had struck there was not a tree or house or wall standing, and the debris was stacked up in such confusion that it was impossible to tell where the streets had been; it was simply one huge mass of ruin. Men and women were running and climbing about over the rubbish, shrieking and wailing as they searched for missing relatives or friends. Here and there bodies lay crippled or mangled, and altogether the aspect was most heartrending. Fortunately the place where we were sheltered was at the edge of the storm's path, and thus we escaped being buried alive.

It soon began to grow dusk, and I returned to the house with the children, while my father remained to do what he could for those in distress. The shadows of night fell upon a scene of destruc-

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tion that challenges the powers of language adequately to describe.

The husband and father of the household where I stayed was somewhere in the town, and the family was in a state of distraction and tears all through the night. Early next morning he was brought home on a stretcher, but happily his worst injury was a broken leg. The mingled sorrow and joy of the wife and the three older children was indeed a remarkable fusion of sadness and beauty.

Later in the day, when my father returned, we both went in search of the horse, and in the afternoon found her at a farm-house about two miles distant. Nothing was missing from the wagon, except that a few light articles had been blown away. The horse had continued in the direction we were going, which was directly away from the path of the storm.

The cyclonic center of the storm did not cover the full area of the town, so only a wide path through it was completely devastated.

Somewhere along the route my father bought an old musket, for which he paid a dollar, though I never saw him load it or shoot it off but once. Later—perhaps six months or more—I heard him dickering with a man who wanted to buy it.

The man said: "How much do you want for it?"

My father replied: "Well, I should think it ought to be worth five dollars."

Remembering what he had paid for it, I at once

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interposed: "Oh, no, don't you remember you only paid a dollar for it?" My father scowled at me, and the man smiled—but he didn't buy the gun—much to my momentary delight, for I wanted to keep it; but in less than ten minutes after we left him I had cause to regret that he didn't buy it, and that I had had any knowledge of what it cost, or indeed that it had ever existed. That old gun was destined to cause me a lot of trouble. I used to take it out of the wagon when my father wasn't around and point it at birds and other objects; then I spunked up courage enough to pull back the hammer, and, pointing it at some object, would shut my eyes tightly and pull the trigger. I must have done this a great many times, for the cap tube became battered down so flat that a percussion cap could not be fitted over it. Once my father caught me in the act of aiming it at something, and proceeded to thrash me for it. When he discovered the battered tube he thrashed me again; and it seemed to me that every time he thought of it thereafter he repeated the performance. That gun was a sort of tie that brought us very near together—with painful frequency, I might say.

When we arrived at La Crosse, Wisconsin, he took the ill-fated weapon to a gunsmith to have the tube repaired; and, upon returning in disgust, because the man said it wasn't worth fixing, with a forcible "Humph!" he threw it into the wagon and drove on.

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I do not recall the exact time of the year at which we reached La Crosse, Wisconsin, but it was certainly during the active logging season. We crossed the Mississippi on a ferry-boat, there being no bridge at that time. The river — which must have been more than a mile wide at that point — was filled with great logs, and as far as I could see up and down the stream it looked like one huge raft, with the logs all twisting and turning in the seething current. It was to me an enthralling spectacle. The boat was propelled by a horse that kept going round in a circle, about midships. There were three men—one at each end, and the third in the center—with long steel-pointed spars, who were kept busy pushing the logs away to prevent them from jamming and clogging against the upper side of the boat.

In one place, where the current was swiftest, a tremendous log came down crosswise, backed by three or four pressing against it lengthwise, and struck the boat with such force that we were nearly capsized. The crossing afforded an exciting bit of entertainment, but I was glad to reach the opposite shore. The number of logs that were afloat in that great river is almost inconceivable.

When I visited La Crosse twenty years later, not a log was to be seen in any direction; and as I stood on the bank at almost the identical spot where we embarked on the ferry-boat, and looked out upon the peaceful bosom of the great father of American

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waterways, the recollections of twenty years earlier seemed like an unreality.

It is my grateful privilege to here record the fact that throughout the entire journey we were treated in the most kind and considerate manner by the people in every locality along our line of travel; that is, as far as my father would permit of such treatment. The exception noted—which is one of only a very few such instances that occurred—was due to no fault or lack of friendly or humane impulse on the part of the people who turned us away, but to my father's abruptness of speech and manner. He was of a proud and haughty bearing, and would always insist upon paying for our night's lodging, or for any other favor or service. He usually found it difficult, and frequently impossible, when traveling through the country districts, to induce the farmers to accept any gratuity for a dinner; or for a supper, with a night's lodging and breakfast. In some instances they would name their price and accept it with alacrity; but perhaps more often they appeared surprised and at first offended at his offer to pay them anything. I often wonder if the same conditions exist there in these modern times; but I fear that the rapid advance of "civilization" has robbed those people of many of their simple and kindly virtues and customs.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF THE WORLD

OUR travels over the Western prairies, though for the most part of no special significance to me at the time, made many lasting impressions.

Words can but inadequately express the lonesome monotony of a great prairie. The mournful notes of the lark were the only sounds that penetrated the stillness, and these seemed to be in perfect accord with the impressive solitude extending as far as the eye could reach in every direction.

Occasionally, when meandering slowly over these vast expanses of unvaried surface, we met a caravan of emigrants with covered wagons, and they usually stopped to give a passing salutation, or to make some inquiry as to the roads ahead, and how far it was to the next house.

The moment a wagon stopped the canvas cover would be lifted at the side and from one to half a dozen shaggy, unkempt heads would appear and their eager eyes stare at us inquisitively. Some-

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times a child could be heard crying behind the canvas—perhaps because it too wanted to get a view of what was going on outside. I remember that upon the occasion of these meetings I used to amuse myself by counting the ribs of the half-starved horses.

These people—particularly the women and children—always presented an abject and cadaverous look, and their squalid appearance gave even me no occasion for envy. And yet their uninviting condition had its advantages, because among them there was at least some companionship,—an element entirely lacking with me.

My father rarely spoke to me on the road, and I would sit quietly by his side in unbroken silence for hours at a time, while he would hum some unmelodious tune, and occasionally cluck at the horse to urge her along. I was always glad to see any signs of civilization in the distance ahead, and correspondingly depressed when we had passed by—perhaps stopping for a minute to get a drink of fresh water or make some inquiry—and wended our way slowly into the vast expanse beyond.

I remember that somewhere along the way we met a wagon, on the canvas cover of which the following words were crudely painted in large black letters: "KANSAS OR BUST." We saw several with the same inscription, but I particularly remember this one. It was about the noon hour and we all camped and had lunch together.

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There were two little boys about my own size, and we had a pleasant romp,—whereupon my father took me aside and scolded me for “mixing up with such common trash.” After lunch we parted and I bade them a regretful good-by. Facing about in the seat I watched their wagon until it was lost in the distance.

By a strange coincidence, in our wanderings we came across the same people a few weeks later, and they were then returning to the place from which they had originally started. The sign on their wagon-cover had a long horizontal line painted through it, and underneath it, painted in even larger (red) letters, was the significant words: “BUSTED! BY GOD!” My father talked with them for some time, comparing notes and experiences, and I heard the man remark: “Old Missouri is good enough for me.”

We saw many wagons—Prairie Schooners, they called them—with all sorts of enigmatical signs and mottoes painted conspicuously upon their covers.

Once we traveled steadily for three days without seeing any sign of life, except the larks and prairie chickens along the road, which was in reality nothing more than an indistinct trail. Our supply of water and provisions became nearly exhausted, and I had a peculiarly disagreeable feeling that we had wandered off into another world which was not inhabited, and that we should starve to death.

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My father's evasive and unsatisfactory replies to my anxious inquiries were not reassuring.

My heart throbbed with joy when in the afternoon of the third day we came in sight of a house. Even then, upon second thought, I had some misgiving that it might be the abiding-place of some awful devil or strange being, and it was with some surprise that, upon reaching the spot, I discovered the same kind of people that I had been accustomed to seeing. I was in hopes that my father would stop awhile, but, after replenishing our water and provisions with such meagre supplies as were procurable, we "pushed on," and camped that night on the open prairie.

It was in the autumn season, and we made a comfortable bed on the long dry grass, under the wagon, as usual. The soil here must have been exceedingly fertile, for the grass was very tall and thick. Indeed, that locality is now one of the most productive farming sections in this country.

For a long time I lay awake vainly endeavoring to puzzle out the dilemma as to what sort of a world we were in, where its ends were, and if we should ever again return to civilization where I could see lots of houses and people.

The wind howled and whistled a weird medley as it whirled in eddies around the wagon and swept on over the great open prairie. The moon shone brightly, and the "man" up there (for my father had told me that there was a man in the moon)

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appeared to be looking down at us. I wondered if he was as lonesome as I was. Without being able to solve any of the mental problems that perplexed me I buried my face in my pillow and fell asleep.

During the night I was suddenly awakened by my father, and on jumping up I beheld a sight that congealed my blood and filled me with speechless horror. A great cloud of fire and smoke was rolling up in the distance and I could see the flames dancing up through the black smoke, like great red tongues extending into the sky. My first thought was that the world was on fire (for I had been told, and firmly believed, that some day it would all burn up) and that the end had come. The fire was principally on the windward side of us, but it seemed to extend around on both sides as well, and the heavens were brightly illuminated.

My next thought was of my sister; had the flames already consumed her? I wondered how long we should have to suffer, and if we should burn forever, for I had been taught that when the world came to an end all the bad boys would burn through eternity in a seething cauldron of fire and brimstone.

The great tidal wave of flame rolled on nearer and nearer, and the agony of suspense became almost unbearable. I was anxious for the final moment to come, and felt an inclination to rush toward the fire and hasten the inevitable crisis.

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All this time I stood facing the oncoming flames; then upon hearing a crackling, roaring noise behind me I turned quickly and saw the heavens ablaze in that direction also. My father came rushing from the direction toward which I had just turned, and catching me up threw me sprawling into the wagon. I landed on top of the luggage, and springing to my feet I saw him struggling with the frightened horse, which he finally quieted by throwing his coat over her eyes; then bringing her round in front of the wagon, he quickly hitched her into the shafts. I couldn't imagine why he did this, for the flames were now on all sides of us and there appeared to be no escape. At this moment I noticed that the flames which I had discovered behind me were moving rapidly away in the direction of the wind, but from the opposite direction they were bearing down upon us with terrific momentum, and the wind was blowing a hurricane which seemed to increase in velocity as the fire approached.

The moon was now obscured by the clouds of smoke and we were hemmed in by walls of fire on all sides. I could feel the hot air on my cheeks, and the roar of the wind and flames became almost deafening. I sank down on my knees in hopeless despair. My father jumped into the wagon, and giving the horse a slash with the ends of the reins she dashed forward at a full gallop in the direction toward which the wind was blowing. How far we had gone I do not know, but I remember that pres-

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ently the wagon gave a lurch, the case of books in the back end to which I was clinging turned over backward, and both case and I tumbled out together, and rolled over and over. I lay flat upon the ground in the stifling smoke, expecting the earth to open and swallow me down into a fiery furnace, but after I had lain there a few moments without anything happening, my senses returned in a measure and I noticed the ground was very hot, and that there was no grass there.

I could see no flames in any direction and wondered where the fire had gone. In a few minutes the smoke cleared away sufficiently so that I could see the faint outline of the moon overhead. I crawled around on the ground, and finding it all covered with ashes was uncertain as to whether the world had burned up or not. I was much puzzled to account for the ground having been burned over without burning me up. I tried to get up on my feet, but could not rise, and found that my left leg was useless. I dragged myself up to the box and lay down beside it, wishing that I were dead and out of my misery.

When my father discovered that I was missing he stopped, and when the smoke had partly cleared away returned to look for me, but did not find me until after daybreak. He explained that it was only a prairie fire, and that having lain awake late that night he saw the heavens illumined in the distance and knew what was coming. After rousing me he

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had run out and set the grass afire on the side of the wagon opposite that from which the wind was blowing, and from there the fire had gone on with a rush, leaving a burned space over which we could retreat in safety. Of course when the flames from behind reached the place where he had started the fire there was nothing to feed upon and they died out. This was all new to me.

A prairie fire is a dreadful sight, especially at night when accompanied by the gales of wind that blow with terrific velocity across the Western prairies; and in times gone by many a weary emigrant has been awakened at night only just in time to utter a hasty word of prayer before being ushered to his eternal resting-place. In a high wind these fires will travel as fast as a fleet horse can run, and when they are seen approaching the only hope of escape is to start another fire—called a back fire—and then follow along behind it.

Our bedding was all left behind, and not a vestige of it remained. For many days I suffered much pain from a dislocation of my left hip, but I was an uncomplaining patient, for we stopped at the next house—which we reached late in the night—and remained there for about two weeks, during most of which time I lay quietly on a couch, and a lovable and sweet-tempered woman ministered to my wants. There was also a little girl about my own age who reminded me of my sister. She would sit by my couch for hours at a time and listen

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attentively to my stories of personal experiences and adventure, which seemed quite new and wonderful to her. Once she asked me where my home was, and I told her I had none; then she asked about my mother, and I made the same reply; whereupon her eyes filled with tears; which pleased me in a sad way, because I knew she sympathized with me.

The territory around this comfortable home had not been reached by the prairie fire, on account of an intervening stream, and they had no knowledge of the conflagration excepting from the smoke in the heavens. When the time came for our departure the husband and wife, and also the little girl, begged my father to leave me to live with them; the parents pleading that I would be so companionable for their only child; but their entreaties were unavailing, and so amid the tears and emotion of both the little girl and myself I was torn away and again we moved on.

CHAPTER IX

LOST IN THE FOREST

AFTER this pilgrimage of fourteen months, through twelve states, we arrived at Harrisonville, Missouri, early in November. I suspect that my father's exchequer had become pretty well depleted, for I had heard him make a number of inquiries along the road for a winter school to teach.

Near Harrisonville he found a district school that had been closed because of a lot of unruly boys who made it a practice to intimidate and drive out every teacher that had undertaken it. We drove around to see the trustees, who seemed to be of one accord in saying: "They ain't no use tryin' to run thet school, with a whole passel o' big galoots thet don't want no book larnin'. Ye can't larn 'em nawthin', and they won't let no one else larn nawthin'." My father insisted that in his twenty-five years' experience he had never yet been driven out of a school-room, and from the way in which he had kept in training on me I surmised that he was still able to sustain his reputation.

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It was finally arranged, and so announced, that school should open again on December 1, and continue until March 1. The school did continue until March 1, and I attended throughout the three months. My father was about the busiest man in that neighborhood during that period, and those boys have always held a tender place in my remembrance, for they kept him so busy thrashing them by ones and twos at a time that not once during the term did he lay a hand upon me. Indeed, my conquered spirit began timidly to reassert itself, and I fancied that there was still some hope of growing up without being beaten to death. But the dream was of short duration, for the cessation of hostilities did not extend beyond the winter term.

Having brought order out of chaos, the trustees insisted that my father should teach the spring term, which he did; but the pupils consisted chiefly of girls and small boys, for the older boys were detained at home by the spring work, and he soon relaxed into his old habits of beating me every now and then just to keep me mindful of the fact that he was still the "boss," as he called himself; of which distinction he seemed very proud.

He appeared to be so constituted as to require some drastic means of working off a certain amount of surplus energy and venom, and he kept me by him as a convenient safety-valve. I have often observed that after thrashing me he would benignly fold his hands behind his back and stalk about with appar-

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ent relief. A sardonic smile would sometimes creep over his face, perhaps betokening his self-satisfaction over the task of "conquering" me.

We left Harrisonville in July, and as we had increased our load by the addition of a few unnecessary articles, we were obliged to lighten it by walking most of the way. Occasionally, when the roads were good and the ground level, we both got on and rode. I had no idea where we were going—in fact I never had—and it did not matter much. I was foot-sore and fatigued, and day after day I dragged my feet heedlessly along one after the other, looking anxiously forward to nightfall when I could lie down and rest. I had but little more thought of conditions and future prospects than as though I had been a dog leashed to the axle of the wagon.

I would frequently trail along at a distance behind, perhaps stopping to watch a squirrel or some other object that attracted my attention, and would then run and catch up with the wagon. Upon one occasion, while going through a heavily wooded section, I was attracted by a flock of crows flying and cawing around and through the top of a large tree, in which I discovered a great horned owl perched on one of the large limbs. I had often been frightened by hearing the melancholy hooting sound made by these birds in the lonely woods at night, and was deeply interested in this one, the first I had seen sitting still.

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The wagon got out of hearing, and I started up the road on the run. After running some distance I came to a fork in the road, and stopped, not knowing which way to go. Finally I took the road to the right, and ran until I was so exhausted that I sat down on a log to rest. It occurred to me that I must have taken the wrong road, and after regaining my breath I ran back to the fork.

After listening for the sound of the wagon and hearing nothing, I examined the ground for the wagon track, and found that it had gone to the left; so I struck off up that road and after running as far as I could, I sat down again to rest, having by this time become much frightened. It was late in the afternoon, and as the tree-tops rocked and creaked in the wind the scene was lonely and dismal enough. I called aloud several times as I ran on, and the cheerless echo of my voice through the woods only added to my consternation.

Continuing along the road, I anxiously looked for some sign of a habitation, but found none. It was a long way back to the last house we had passed, and I concluded that it would be better to go on, hoping to overtake the wagon or find a farm-house.

I walked and ran by turns until it got dark; then, in a state of utter exhaustion, I lay down by the roadside and soon fell asleep. I was awakened in the night by rain drops falling on my face. I crawled along on the ground, feeling my way among the brush until I found a big tree, and sat down close

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up to the trunk. It thundered a great deal, and every little while a flash of lightning would illumine the heavens; but I had been long accustomed to this, and it did not add much to my discomfort, which was already quite complete.

The thought that troubled me most was my doubt about being able to find the road again when daylight came, for in the occasional flashes of light I could see nothing but trees and brush. Suppose I should start the wrong way and get lost in the woods! I did not dare move away from the tree until daylight dawned.

It was a long, dreary night that I spent beneath the branches of that tree, and the awful phantoms of bears and wildcats that I imagined to be staring at me from all directions as I peered about in the dark, cause me to shudder when I think of it, even to this day.

Overcome by hunger and fatigue I fell asleep, and when I awoke the morning sun was shining through the trees. I looked about wonderingly, and for a moment could not imagine where I was or how I came to be there. Seeing an opening a short distance beyond, I crept along through the thick brush, and after going perhaps fifty yards came out into the road.

Not knowing the direction from which I had come, I started off, in hopes of meeting a team or of finding a settlement. After wandering along in a state of blind terror until the sun was well up in the

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heavens I sat down on a big stump by the roadside, wet, hungry, and exhausted.

A large red squirrel sat up in the crotch of a nearby sapling, chuckling and barking at me as if I were an unwelcome intruder; but I was as anxious to be out of his territory as he was to have me leave it. I was almost famished, and wondered if he had had his breakfast, and what he lived on; if I could find where he had eaten, and if there might be a few crumbs of nuts or something that he had left.

After staggering along a little farther I lay down in the middle of the road and again fell asleep.

The next I knew I was looking up into the face of a strange man with a long bushy beard. He lifted me up and placed me on the seat in his wagon, to which two horses were hitched, and drove on.

How far we went, or what he said, or what I said, I have no recollection; but I do remember his driving up to a house and carrying me into a room where the people gave me some food. I was treated kindly, and told them the story of how I came to be lost.

I spent six enjoyable days there before my father found me. He said that shortly after passing the fork in the road he looked back, and not seeing me waited a little while; then fearing that I might take the wrong turn, he drove back, and not finding me at the fork continued to drive on, expecting to

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meet me. While he was looking for me down the road I had returned to the fork, and gone to the left. But not knowing which way to go to find me he camped there for the night, and had been searching and calling up and down the roads and through the woods for the entire six days. He was more pleased at finding me than I was at being found. He did not whip me.

The kind people into whose hands I had fallen would accept nothing for my keep, and continuing our journey we arrived at Atchison, Kansas, one afternoon late in August.

Tying the horse to one of the posts in the public square, my father left me there under the hot sun, with the strict injunction not to go ten feet away from the wagon, while he went in search of the post office. I wriggled uneasily around, sitting or standing on first one object then another in the wagon, and watching the people hurrying to and fro, until, tiring of the monotony, I fell asleep. When my father returned he woke me and gave me some cheese and crackers, which I devoured with avidity.

We drove out into the country a few miles, and halting at a large farm-house my father made some inquiry of the man who came out. I saw him point down the road, and heard him say: "That's the place." We drove on and soon came to a little cabin by the roadside, out in the open, without any fence or trees around it. There were two rooms, the kitchen and the woodshed, but it was hard to

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tell which was which. There were two doors,—one to go in, and the same one to come out at. There were two little square windows in one room, and one in the other, with the glass all broken out. A small box served as a doorstep, and the walls and floors inside looked as if the last inhabitants had been a drove of hogs, and not very clean ones at that. There were no ceilings, and in looking up through the cross-beams I could see the sun's rays shining through the numerous holes in the roof. There was not a particle of paint to be seen on the walls either inside or out.

In one room there was an old tumbled-down bedstead, an overturned chair, with but three legs and no seat, and a rusty iron kettle with the bottom knocked out. In the next room—if such it could be called—the floor was of dirt construction—indeed to all appearances the other floor might have been of the same—and in one corner there was an old pine table crudely constructed of rough lumber, on which stood a dilapidated tin lamp, without chimney or wick, and a lot of dented tin cans; while in the center of this so-called room lay an old bed-tick half-filled with grass, which protruded through the several punctures in the fabric. This completed the household furnishings as far as I observed, and I observed them pretty carefully.

The grass and weeds had grown up above the window-sills around the house, and altogether the place looked about as forlorn as I felt. After sur-

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veying the premises inside and out my father stood for a few moments in a silently meditative mood; then, giving a significant grunt as an indication of final disapproval, he began unloading the wagon. I stood looking at him, stupefied with amazement, until he startled me out of my reverie by yelling at me to set to work and help him. I asked no questions—I seldom did—and during the time that we were inquisitively looking about the premises not a word was spoken. I wondered if this was to be our home!

My father made arrangements for us to stay a few days at a nearby farm-house while the cabin was undergoing preparations for occupancy. A few articles of new furniture were procured, and the next time I saw the place it looked a little better than at first, but not so well as to cause me any undue exultation.

While staying at the house of the neighbor, I met a rather large boy, who manifested a great fondness for playing all sorts of tricks on me. He had an old army musket (much longer than ours) of which he seemed very proud, and every two or three days, when called upon to kill a chicken for dinner, he would take his musket, and creeping close up to the unsuspecting chicken so that he could almost touch it with the muzzle, he would shoot its head off.

Several times I witnessed this wonderful feat of bravery and marksmanship, and once I asked him

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to let me try it; but he declined, saying, "You'll never be able to shoot like that." I didn't know but he was right, for thus far my gunning adventures had been attended by rather unhappy results. However, I was determined to experience the sensation of shooting a gun off, and continued to tease him to let me shoot at something.

One afternoon he came in breathless haste over to the cabin and told me that if I would comewith him he would let me shoot a chicken. I snatched my hat and went with him, hurrying along ahead most of the way, filled with joyful expectations. He went into the old smoke-house, brought out the gun, and as he handed it to me I fairly quivered with delight. Pointing out a chicken in the barnyard, he told me to poke the gun through a crack in the fence and rest it on one of the boards, which I did. When I tried to aim it at the chicken the muzzle end wobbled so that it is doubtful if I could have hit a chicken had it been as big as a barn. At any rate I steadied it as best I could, and shutting my eyes tightly, pulled the trigger, and off she went with a bang! I was hurled backward a distance of five or six feet, and sprawled out on the flat of my back. My first thought was that I must have held the wrong end of the gun to my shoulder. I sat up and looked around for the gun, which I discovered some distance behind me.

It did not occur to me to look for the chicken, and even if it had, I should not have found it, for

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by that time it was perhaps pluming its feathers in the shade behind the barn. Upon looking for the boy I saw him doubled up like a jack-knife upon the ground going through all sorts of bodily and facial contortions, and I was greatly frightened, for I thought I must have hit him instead of the chicken. But my fears were soon allayed, for I discovered that he was only convulsed with laughter. He got up and, leaning against a tree, fairly howled with delight. It was a pity that I couldn't join in with him, for it was clearly a one-sided comedy.

Realizing that he had played a trick on me, I jumped up and ran bareheaded every step of the way home. It was some time before I could figure out how to get even with him, but finally I hit upon a plan. I remembered that he had always kept his gun out in the smoke-house,—usually loaded,—for I had often watched him load it and set it away. So the next Sunday morning when he drove by, taking the family to church, I ran over to the place, and, after assuring myself that no one was around, I cautiously ventured into the smoke-house in quest of the gun. Sure enough, there it stood in the corner, with the old powder-horn hanging on the wall beside it. I hastily pulled out the wooden plug, and putting the mouth of the horn into the muzzle held it up until all the powder ran out into the barrel. Then I gathered up a lot of nails and walnut shells and rammed them down into the barrel with the iron ramrod, repeating this operation

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until it was filled to within a couple of inches of the muzzle, just so the filling wouldn't show.

At this moment the wind blew the door shut with a bang, which almost paralyzed me with fright, for I thought the gun had gone off; then I thought someone had discovered me and shut me in. Tip-toeing to the door and finding it unlocked, I opened it just wide enough to poke my head out and looked around, but saw no one. After arranging things where I had found them I slipped out quietly, closed the door, and ran all the way home, looking around several times to see if anyone was after me.

When I rushed up to the cabin all out of breath my father was sitting outside in the shade of the building, with his chair propped up against the side, reading a book. He inquired the occasion of my excitement and breathless condition, and I told him I had been running a foot-race with myself. He replied that Sunday was no time for such "monkey-shines," and told me to get my spelling-book and sit down and be still, which I was quite willing to do.

After thinking matters over awhile it suddenly occurred to me that I had no idea how much powder was in that horn, and the more I thought of it the more alarmed I became for fear something awful would happen. I didn't know how much powder it took to load a gun, but I did know that a horn was supposed to hold more than one charge. I thought, however, it couldn't hold any more than

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he had put in for me to shoot off, and this somewhat dispelled my anxiety. Then I thought of the nails and walnut shells, and that the gun might burst and kill him; that I would be held responsible for his death and would be put in jail. I wondered if there was time for me to run over and get the gun and bury it; and was on the point of acting upon this apparently feasible idea when the carriage came along with the folks returning from church.

It had been the custom of the boy to kill the chicken for dinner at about ten o'clock in the forenoon, two or three times a week; so next morning I waited impatiently for the gun to go off. Eleven o'clock came, with no report, and I figured that this being wash-day Tuesday would be chicken-day. Several times I thought of going over to tell the boy what I had done, but deliberated that a confession would probably be attended with worse results than if things were allowed to take their course. Next morning I listened again, and at about ten o'clock there was an awful explosion which echoed and re-echoed as the sound rolled across the undulating Common out back of the house. I stood just outside our door, while my father was inside the house; and upon hearing the loud report he rushed to the door and asked me, "What was that noise?" I was much startled, and said: "I don't know—I didn't hear any noise," scarcely realizing what I was saying. He looked at me for a moment

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in bland astonishment—for this was one of his occasional peaceful days—then turned back into the house with the remark, “You must be going deaf.”

It was a day of apprehension, and so was the next, for I didn’t hear a word about the boy. I tried to think of some errand that would serve as an excuse to go over and see what had happened. Remembering that some time previous my father had sent me over to borrow some sugar, I asked him if he wanted me to return it; and was disappointed when he said: “No, never mind now.”

There was a scythe to be returned, but he was not quite through with it. Noticing my anxiety he said: “What ails you, anyway? Haven’t I told you a hundred times that I don’t want you to go funnin’ with that boy?”

I presume he was easily within bounds in saying “a hundred times”; for it seemed as if he had repeated the admonition more times than that in a single day.

A few days later he sent me over in a great rush for something, and I lost no time in getting over there. Upon reaching the house I was much relieved to see the boy walking out in the barn-yard—for this assured me that he was not dead—but I was greatly pained to see that his right arm was in a sling, and that there was a bandage about his neck. He did not see me, and I was glad of it. In a week or two he was all right again, and it turned out

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that his shoulder was only sprained and not badly injured.

The gun blew all to pieces, and it was little short of miraculous that he escaped with such slight injuries. Some of the flying debris had struck him in the neck, causing a shallow flesh wound which, however, soon healed. A few weeks later he asked me why I never came over to see him, and I told him my father objected,—which was true.

The following winter my father taught the district school about a mile distant, which I attended; but I can remember nothing of importance that took place that winter, except that I felt very lonely.

CHAPTER X

A FASHIONABLE BOARDING-HOUSE

EARLY the following spring my father's spirit of unrest again asserted itself, and this time I was not sorry, for there was nothing in or around our present abode that appeared very much more cheerful or homelike than on the day of our arrival.

The long winter evenings spent alone with my father are not conducive to pleasant reflections, and the seven months' residence there forms an empty chapter which in passing over and forgetting nothing is lost. There are a few such early chapters which for want of special incident I have almost entirely forgotten; there are others which I could not forget; but fewest of all are the ones that I would not forget if I could.

We left the place near Atchison early one drizzly morning in April, and upon turning my back upon the cabin and surroundings I never once looked back, for fear that, like Lot's wife, I should turn to a pillar of salt and have to remain there. I heard the story of Sodom and Gomorrah at Sunday-

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school during the winter, and for some reason it caused me to think of our desolate place out on the border of the Common (as it was called), and I thought what a dreadful thing it would be for any one fleeing from there to look back.

During the spring and early summer we wandered leisurely about with no apparent purpose or destination, and I began to fear that we were off on another trip over the prairies and through the wildernesses. But some time late in the summer we drove into Atlantic, where my father bought me a new suit of clothes and left me for a few days in charge of a woman who conducted a rather fashionable boarding-house.

The first time I went to the table I was much embarrassed, for I felt as if everyone was staring at me. The customs and table manners were quite strange to me. When they all took their seats there wasn't a thing to eat on the table, and as they sat gazing silently at me I began to fidget uneasily in my seat, and wondered if they blamed me for anything that was lacking. I had always been accustomed to being made responsible for everything that was missing, or had gone wrong, and somehow I felt that they suspected me of having gone to the kitchen and eaten all the food. My father, who had remained for the first meal, sat straight up in his chair at my side, as grim and silent as a mummy, with his coal-black hair cocked up at the front like a shock of oats.

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Presently a young lady appeared, clad in a pretty white dress, with a large white apron tied around her slender waist, with a fluffy bow knot in the rear, and a little white mat with a fringed border on her head. Her eyes were snappy, her cheeks were rosy, her mouth was dainty, and on the whole I thought she was quite the prettiest creature I had ever seen.

The seats at the table were all filled, and I couldn't imagine where she was going to sit. I hoped they would make room for her on the opposite side of the table, so I could look at her. Sure enough, she stepped lightly up behind a woman who sat facing me, and stooping over asked her something in a low tone, which I supposed was a gentle request for her to move over and make room. My heart went pit-a-pat for an instant—but only an instant, for the woman shook her head. I could have choked her for being so unkind. The girl then came around to my side of the table, and stepping up behind another woman asked her something. I craned my neck to see what answer she got, but couldn't make out whether the woman said yes or no. I concluded that it must be the latter, for the young lady immediately turned and started to leave the room. I made a move to get up and offer her my seat, but she had gone before I could say a word.

All was still again until presently the woman opposite caught my eye, smiled pleasantly, and asked me if I had traveled far. I was so angry at her that I hung my head and made no answer. My

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father gave me a poke in the side, and said, "Can't you speak?"

I said: "Yes—no—I don't know," and the woman looked at me with some astonishment.

Presently she said, "Has the cat got your tongue?"

"No," I said; "I ain't seen any cat"; whereupon they all tittered—except my father, who looked down and scowled at me. The woman facing me took up her napkin and wiped her mouth, which seemed curious, for her mouth didn't appear to be dirty. At this juncture the young lady returned, carrying a plate of soup on a round flat thing, and coming around put it down in front of the lady who had last rebuffed her. The lady paid no attention to it, and I thought she must be angry. The girl asked someone else a question, and again disappeared through the door. Again she returned with another plate of soup, which she placed before another woman, who sat there like a statue and didn't even look at it. I thought they were a funny lot, and that they were either in a huff about something, or else were not hungry.

Finally the young lady came up behind me and asked me something in a subdued tone of voice. Not hearing what she said I turned and looked at her inquiringly, but my father said "Yes," and away she went before I could ask her what she had said. She brought me a plate of soup; then I noticed that they all took up their spoons and began sip-

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ping, in which operation I mechanically followed suit.

They talked and laughed noisily, excepting my father, who assumed his accustomed stern, grouchy look, and I felt sure he must be angry with them for laughing and having such a pleasant time at the table. I did not pay much attention to what they were saying, for it was all like Greek to me. I wondered how they could think of so much to talk about; and if I should ever learn to talk and laugh like that.

Meanwhile I busied myself with my soup, and was in a quandary, wondering what else we were going to get. I continued to think of that pretty creature, and eyed her closely every time she came in. I wondered if she were going to wait until we were through, then eat at the second table, as I had sometimes done at farm-houses; if so, I wanted to wait also, just to sit and admire her. The fact was, my appetite had taken wings and I did not much care whether there was to be anything more to eat or not.

After finishing my soup I looked about and saw that everybody was still eating, excepting the woman across from me, who sat drumming lightly on the table with her fork, while with the other hand she absent-mindedly twitched at an ornament that hung from a chain around her neck. I couldn't imagine what she had come to the table for if she wasn't hungry.

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After what seemed a long wait she tapped a little bell, and I laid down my spoon, supposing that meant for the people to stop eating. Upon looking around I noticed that most of them sat with their arms either folded or down under the table, and apparently waiting for something. I wondered what was going to happen next, and kept my eye on the lady at the bell, whom I now took to be the leader. I was determined to follow her example, whatever she did.

The door opened and again the girl appeared. She went to the lady to whom she had first served soup and taking up her plate sailed away through the door, repeating this performance in the same order that she had brought them in, until at last she reached me. It seemed strange to me that she didn't bring in a large dishpan or something and carry the dishes all out at one load, and save all those needless trips.

At length the girl came in with a big long dish on which was a piece of meat large enough for a lion; and placing it down squarely in front of the woman at the bell, stood up behind her. I thought she must have suddenly found her appetite, and wondered if the girl had to stand all the while she was eating that great piece of meat. Taking up a large knife and fork—much larger than any of the others had—the woman began cutting the meat into slices, while the girl carried them around to the different persons, until it came to my turn.

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Before cutting the last slice the woman looked up at me and said, "Would you like yours rare or well done?" I didn't know how she could have rare meat and well-done meat in the same piece, but said "Yes," just to be agreeable, for I now felt that I had misjudged her, and wanted to make amends.

Again they all sat and waited as if they were dissatisfied with their portions. After serving me with the meat the young lady quietly left the room, but soon returned with a large dish of mashed potatoes which she held down in front of the leading lady, who proceeded to take out what she wanted; then the dish was carried around to each of the others. Other vegetables were served in the same order, and everybody—my father, of course, excepted—continued to laugh and talk. Later came the pudding and pie, then the coffee,—served in the stingiest little cups I ever saw. It seemed strange that they had no milk or cream for the coffee; but perhaps the cow had gone dry, as I remembered that ours had once done.

After the coffee cups were removed we were each given a glass bowl of clear water, and I noticed that mine had three or four small green leaves in it; but no one seemed to be thirsty, and none of them drank. I was shocked to see the head lady put both hands at once into her bowl and then touch the tips of her fingers lightly to her lips as if making some sign; then taking up her napkin she gently wiped her mouth again and laid the napkin

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on the table, without folding it. Two or three of the others folded up their napkins in a careless way, without appearing to pay much attention to what they were about. I had by this time begun to get the run of things somewhat, and felt a little more at my ease.

It was the happiest family I had ever seen, the only discordant feature being that the best-looking one in the whole lot had to do all the work. I accounted for this by surmising that they took turns at cooking and bringing in the victuals, and that perhaps next time the pretty girl would take her place at the table, and let someone else carry the food and take away the dishes.

Soon after the noon meal was over my father went away, and I did not see him again for four days, during which time I enjoyed a pleasant interval of peace and tranquillity. It seemed so good to be out from under his tyrannical control that I hoped something would intervene to detain him longer; indeed, I may as well make a clean breast of it and admit that my hope was that he would lose his way and never be able to find me again.

Late in the afternoon, while looking about the premises, I saw the pretty girl out in the back yard hanging out clothes; but she was then dressed so differently that at first I scarcely knew her. She had on a dark dress, which I did not think becoming to her, and her sleeves were rolled up to her elbows as though she had been washing. Her

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white apron was missing, and in lieu of the white mat on her head she had on a sunbonnet. I wanted to say something to her, but didn't quite dare; then again I could not think of a thing to say.

Most of the other people left the house in the afternoon, two or three of them in carriages, and I thought they must be very rich in order to afford so many horses and carriages. I saw none of them doing any work about the house, excepting the pretty girl, and it seemed a shame to make her do it all.

At supper we occupied the same seats as before, excepting that the chair beside me in which my father had sat was filled by a large man whom I had not previously seen. With the exception of a few bungling mistakes—one of which was, while cutting a piece of cold meat, my plate obstinately turned bottom side up in my lap—I got through supper without much difficulty.

I have neglected to mention that in the afternoon, while roving curiously over the house, I caught a passing glimpse of a woman whose features seemed so familiar that for an instant I was quite startled, and set to pondering over where I had seen her face before; but, being unable to place her anywhere in my recollections, I endeavored to dismiss the matter from my mind.

After satisfying my curiosity by inspecting all the halls and stairways, and staring in through all the open doors, I returned to the sitting-room

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on the first floor and sat huddled up on the sofa in a back corner. Again I found myself cogitating over the face of that woman, which so much resembled one that I had seen before. Then, leaning my head over on the soft cushion, I thought myself in a paradise more heavenly than anything I had ever dreamed of. After musing awhile over the pleasant surroundings, with that beautiful rosy-cheeked creature as the central attraction, I settled into a peaceful slumber which lasted until I was awakened for supper.

That night when showing me to my room the woman asked, "Where is your bag?" I was astonished, and fearing I had neglected something said, "I don't know." She went downstairs and left me there wondering what had gone wrong.

She soon returned and said: "I can't find it—did you bring it in with you?" Not knowing what else to say, I said, "I ain't seen anything." Then all at once it occurred to me that upon arriving in town my father had bought me a bag of peanuts, and reaching down I drew the bag with the few remaining nuts from my pocket and said: "Yes, I've got it." She laughed heartily, and said something about my being "full of humor," and remembering that once someone had told me I was "full of prunes," I wondered if it meant the same thing. After informing me that "the bath-room is down at the end of the hall," she said, "Good night," and closed the door.

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"What is a bath-room?" I thought; and I wondered what it had to do with me.

The bed was daintily prepared, there being two soft pillows with spotless covers and white sheets, —the upper one, with the other covers, gracefully rolled back,—and as I undressed, said my prayers, and crept into bed I felt that I had just begun upon a life worth living.

Next morning while roaming about the yard I saw the object of my meditations out back of the house hanging out napkins, and made up my mind that I would not lose this opportunity of speaking to her. Summoning up all the courage at my command, I walked boldly up and got within a few feet of her before she saw me. As she turned and looked down at me I experienced a sort of a choking sensation and forgot what I had intended to say; but her pleasant smile reassured me, and after stammering for a moment, endeavoring to get control of my tongue, I said, "That's a funny name you've got."

She smilingly inquired, in a voice that I thought very sweet and musical, "Why's that?"

"Ain't your name Miss Waitress?"

"Why, who told you that was my name?"

"Someone in the house told me."

She laughed, and said, "That's not my name."

Fearing I had made a blunder, and that she would be vexed, I hung my head shamefacedly, hoping she would tell me her name, or say some-

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thing. She quickly came to my rescue, and surprised me by saying, "You've grown since I saw you." I didn't think I had grown much in stature since yesterday, though in happiness I had expanded a great deal.

"When did you see me?" I said.

Apparently observing my puzzled look, she said: "You don't remember me, do you?"

"No—yes, I saw you yesterday."

Then, pushing back her sunbonnet and squatting down so that her face was very close to mine, she looked earnestly into my eyes and said, "Are you *very* sure you *never* saw me before?" I was so dazzled and confused at gazing into her eyes at such close range that I couldn't have expressed my recollections even if I had had any. Looking down at the ground bashfully, I managed to stammer out, "I think you're awful pretty."

"I used to know you," she said, "and thought you were very cunning." This perplexed me all the more, and I tried to think where she had seen me, and wished I might seem as cunning to her now as I did then. Upon looking up again my eyes met hers and I felt inclined to put out my hand and touch her lovely rosy cheek to assure myself that I was not in a dream; for I remembered having frequently dreamed of joyful things and later awoke to my disappointment. Often I had dreamed of finding large sums of money, and sometimes, fearing in my dream that it was only a delusion, I

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would snatch up as much as I could carry and rush off to spend it before I woke up; but I always grew tired running or stubbed my toe, and, falling down, came to my senses before I spent the money.

She laughed a merry little "Ha, ha," and appeared to enjoy the advantage she had of knowing me without my knowing her. As her eyes sparkled and her sweet dainty lips parted in laughter, showing the rows of pretty white teeth, I stood transfixed before a picture that verily enchanted me.

At this juncture a voice from the back door called, "Hel-en!" which woke me from my mental abstraction; and giving my chin a gentle pinch she said, "I'll see you again"; and skipped lightly away into the house, leaving me standing there staring after her fleeting form as mute as the clothes-line post at my side.

After recovering my senses and assuring myself that I was really on earth, I went into the house and up to my room. I vainly attempted to solve the mystery as to where this girl had seen me, and where I had seen the strange woman. As I sat rocking back and forth in the rocking-chair, with my thoughts in a state of confusion, the mysterious woman appeared at the door, and looking in at me for a moment she smiled and said: "Why, how do you do, Bobby?"

I jumped up in astonishment. How did she know my name!—for I had told it to no one in the house except the landlady. Advancing toward me with

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outstretched hand she asked : "Don't you know me, dear ?" I instinctively took her proffered hand, but was too much engrossed with my own thoughts to make an immediate reply. For a moment I stared into her eyes as she bent over and held my hand, when suddenly it dawned upon me where I had heard that "*dear*"; then, throwing my arms around her neck, I cried: "Yes, yes, I know you—you are my teacher!" She embraced me fondly; then, letting me go, she held me off at arm's length, and looking me over wistfully she inquired: "My dear, where *have* you been all this time ?"

Disregarding her question at first, I asked her how she came to be there.

"I am boarding here during my vacation."

"But where do you eat?" I asked.

"Yesterday and last night I dined out with friends."

"I didn't see you at breakfast this morning."

"Because," she replied, "I had my breakfast served in my room. But I shall be with you at dinner."

I was simply wild with joy. After dancing around her and flapping my arms with delight, I managed to ask her how she came to be such a long, long way from home.

"Why, my dear, I am right near home. I live near the school, and am spending my vacation in town, where I am taking a special normal course."

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I didn't know what a normal course was, but it made no difference. I couldn't make out how she could be near her old home when I thought we were at that moment thousands of miles away from where I had seen her.

"I'm so sorry you didn't arrive in time to see your sister before she went abroad."

"My *sister*! Abroad! Was she here—where has she gone?" I anxiously inquired.

"Why, don't you know where you are—that you are in Atlantic, where your sister has been living?"

"How did my sister get here?" I asked, still more mystified than before.

"You poor bewildered child, she came here to live with Mrs. Brandon when you went away with your father, and that dear old soul has become so fond of her that she has taken her abroad as a companion, and wants to adopt her as her own child."

"Where is abroad?" I asked.

"It is away off across the ocean. They will not return for two years."

"What ocean—how far is it—can I go there and see her?"

"No, no, you must wait till she returns—it is a long way off."

The thought of waiting two years to see my sister was depressing; but when she told me that my old home was but three miles out in the country, I was almost overcome with joy, and asked if she would take me out to see it. She replied that

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some day we would go out for a drive, and see the old place.

"If Mrs. Brandon takes my sister for her own child," I inquired, "can she still be my sister, and can I see her?"

"Yes, she will still be your own dear sister, and you can see her. She will be very rich, for Mrs. Brandon has no children, and is going to leave lots of money to her. She has been trying to find your father to ask his consent, and not hearing from him for so long feared he might be dead."

I didn't tell her my inmost thoughts,—that I was sorry her fears could not be confirmed. The thought of my father caused me to shudder. It was the first time his image had darkened my vision since he left the day before—my mind had been so much occupied with the pleasant things about me. She must have noticed my downcast look, for she asked:

"Does it make you feel sad?"

"Oh, no," I said, "I'm awful glad."

Then she asked me to tell her all about myself: where I had been, and what I had done,—if I had been to school, and if I had had good teachers.

"I'm afraid you won't like me if I tell you, for father says I'm a bad boy, and that I am going to the bad place just as fast as I can."

"Pshaw, I don't believe a word of it. Come, now, tell me where you've been."

I told her some of the experiences and trials I

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had been through. At length I noticed her looking intently at my mouth, and she said: "For goodness' sake, what made that scar on your lip?" I lowered my head to evade her look, and remembering the painful occasion of this blemish (the circumstances of which I have deemed too revolting to be recorded), I began to cry. She seemed instantly to understand, and almost screamed: "No, no, don't—don't tell me"; and, kneeling down with her arms about me, she drew me close to her and sobbed—repeating over and over in a trembling voice: "You poor, dear child! you poor, dear child! it's a wonder you're alive!" I thought the same thing.

Then she went over to the bed, threw herself across it, face down, and buried her face in her hands. For a few moments I stood watching her, and going over to the bed I timidly stroked her hair and said I was sorry that I had hurt her so. But without looking up she moaned, "Something *must* be done—something *must* be done—it's too awful to be true!"

I had just been so happy, and now I felt myself almost a criminal for having made her so wretched by obeying her request to tell her about myself, and crying when she spoke of my lip.

Dinner was announced, and, when she had washed my face and combed my hair, she asked me to wait while she went to her own room and prepared herself for the meal. Returning she took me by the hand and led me into the dining-room,

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where the others were already seated at the table. The seat beside mine proved to be her regular seat, so much to my delight she sat down beside me. They all looked at me—enviously, I thought—and pinching my cheek gently she looked at those present and said: “This is *my* boy—we are old cronies.” I didn’t know what a “crony” was, but I was quite willing to be that, or anything else, if she said so. I was so proud at this moment that the most supercilious peacock with his gaudy display of mottled plumage would have looked like a picked crow by comparison.

With my teacher to prompt me, the dinner passed uneventfully, and two or three times Miss Helen smiled pleasantly at me as she came in through the door. The landlady was unusually talkative, and paid me a great deal of attention. In fact, I now seemed to be the central figure, or at least I thought so.

After dinner my teacher took me for a stroll up the street, and as we approached a large, beautiful white house, with a big yard filled with flower beds, she pointed to it and said: “That’s where your sister lives, and that house will be hers some day. Mrs. Brandon owns lots of property—she owns the house where we are boarding.”

It made me very happy to think that my sister was to be so rich, and I hoped that some time she would have me come to live with her in that big house. At length it occurred to me that I didn’t

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remember my teacher's name, so turning to her I said, "What's your name?"

"My name is Miss Elsie Whittemore." "What a pretty name," I thought; "and how like her it is." Then I told her about Miss Helen, and my talk with her in the morning, and how anxious I was to know how she knew me.

"Why, yes, that's Helen Northrop; she came to my school when you were there. Her father was killed in a railroad accident, then her mother went to keep house for Mrs. Brandon. Helen also worked there until Mrs. Brandon went abroad, then she came to wait on table for Mrs. Carver."

"Do you think she's pretty?" I inquired.

"Yes, and she's one of the sweetest girls in all the world. Her father used to be well off."

"I think she's pretty, too," I said. By this time we had reached the boarding-house, and my teacher said: "Will you excuse me, dear, for a little while? I have some letters to write." I could think of nothing she had done to be excused for, but in an instant she was off, leaving me standing on the board walk in the front yard.

I ran around to the rear of the house in hopes of finding Miss Helen, and to my delight I saw her standing in the back door. Rushing up to her I said: "*I* know who you are now."

"Who told you?"

"Miss Whittemore told me; and she said you're the sweetest girl in the world."

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"And did you correct her?"

"No, 'cause I thought so too."

She ran down the steps, and putting her arms around me, hugged and kissed me. If all the other pleasures in the first eleven years of my life could be simmered down into one celestial instant's joy, the digested essence of the whole could scarcely have produced a sensation equal to that which thrilled me at that moment.

Late in the afternoon Miss Whittemore took me down town and bought a number of things for me, including a new pair of shoes, some stockings, a cap, a red bow, some handkerchiefs and other little necessary articles, all of which she had me put on in the store; and when I looked at myself in the large mirror there, I thought I was about the handsomest thing in town,—Helen excepted. After surveying me with apparent satisfaction Miss Whittemore asked: "Now, whose boy are you?"

"I'd like to be yours if you'd have me." Whereupon she kissed me, saying, "It's a bargain."

Next day was Sunday, and she took me to church, but I cannot say that I particularly enjoyed the service, for there was very little that I could understand. However, I sat through it, thinking all the while of things I wanted to say, and I stored these up on top of one another at such a fast and furious pace that I should certainly have exploded if that service had lasted ten minutes longer.

CHAPTER XI

MY FIRST PLAYMATE

LATE in the afternoon of the fourth day, while sitting on the front porch talking with Miss Whittemore, I saw my father drive up to the front gate, and my heart seemed to rise up and then drop down with a thump!

The old rig looked like a relic of many wars. One rear wheel was "dished" the wrong way, as if it were ready to collapse at any moment. The paint had long since disappeared, and lumps of dried clay adhered to all parts of the wheels and body of the wagon. The wagon-bed was filled heaping full of furniture and boxes, all piled up in confusion. The harness was much the worse for wear, and the faithful old bay mare looked jaded and disconsolate. Altogether it was perhaps the most dejected and disreputable looking turnout that ever stopped in front of that gate, and I was so ashamed that I wanted to creep under the porch and hide.

My father appeared to have a way of messing things up, with utter disregard as to fitness or

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consistency. Nothing was too good and nothing too bad to be mixed together. He would not think of taking me to a cheap boarding place, yet he unblushingly drove that shabby looking outfit up to the front gate and let it stand there so that everyone on the premises could gaze wonderingly at it. A number of the people came out and stared at it with amazement. I felt that I never wanted to look into the face of anyone in that household again.

My father came briskly up the front walk, and passing us on the porch without any salutation except "Get ready!" he went in at the front door in search of the landlady. During this time I had not spoken a word, but when he had gone in I turned to my teacher and whisperingly said: "That's him!"

All the while she kept gazing at the ramshackle vehicle, and all the while I kept hoping she would stop looking at it, for I feared that now she would dislike me. I was interested to know what her thoughts were, and my curiosity having got the better of me, I said: "I'm afraid now you won't like me any more."

"Why, my dear, why not?"

"Because," I said, "that wagon looks awful!"

She appeared to understand my chagrin and patting me on the shoulder, said: "Never mind that—I love you just the same." I could have wished that old rig looked even worse if it would

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make her like me the better. She seemed deeply absorbed in thought and I suspected that my situation was the occasion of her meditations.

Presently my father came out and, glaring at me, said: "Get your hat." He appeared much disturbed, and clearly something had gone wrong with him. My teacher arose at his approach, and, stepping forward, addressed him: "Mr. Hardwick, I believe?"

"Yes, that's my name," said my father, as he took off his hat.

"Excuse me for intruding myself upon you, but I have taken quite a fancy to your little boy; he was one of my pupils in his first days at school. By a happy circumstance we have renewed our old acquaintanceship here, and have passed the time very pleasantly in each other's company during your absence,—at least, I have enjoyed it, and I hope he has."

She turned and addressed the last remark to me, but I was so filled with agitation that I sat perfectly mute—hoping she would go on, and fearing that her breath would give out before she got through with what she wanted to say.

Continuing, she said: "I have thought perhaps in view of your unsettled condition you would consent to his being taken in charge and kindly treated by some older person; and since I have, like yourself, been a school teacher for some years, I thought of undertaking to look after and educate

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him, if it would meet with your approval." My father stood listening to this gentle, persuasive plea with about as much responsiveness as one would expect from a Durham bull tobacco sign.

Without any apparent discouragement, she went on: "I live near my school with my aged father and mother, and while we are not rich, we enjoy every reasonable comfort, and"—turning again to me—"little Bobby will make a cheerful companion for me. I would look carefully after his education and attend personally to all his needs."

Every word that came from her lips fell upon my ears like a note of beautiful music issuing from some celestial world, and I trembled with anxious forebodings to hear what the answer would be.

She hesitated as if to wait for his reply, and running his fingers through his hair, he said:

"I'm obliged to you, but I guess we'll manage to keep together awhile longer. I prefer to look after his education myself." Then he added, with evident temper: "His sister has already been carried away to Europe without my leave."

In despair I half closed my eyes and relaxed into a sort of stupor, heedless of anything further that was said. I was brought to my senses by a vigorous twitch at my arm and heard my father say, "*Come, come!*" I saw my teacher wipe her eyes with her handkerchief, and moving up to me she stooped down, and putting her arms around me,

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kissed me repeatedly, saying again and again: "It's no use,—it's no use!" Finally, with the words, "God bless you and protect you—I will pray for you as long as I live," she hurried into the house.

I ran around to the rear to say good-by to Helen, but she was nowhere to be seen; so I rapped gently at the back door, which opened and she stood before me.

"Good-by, I'm going!" I said.

"Going where?"

"I don't know—I'm just going—I don't know where."

"Wait a minute," she said, and turning, she went back into the house. Just then I heard my father's voice calling me, but I was resolute in my purpose to wait as she bade me, and to look upon her face once more before taking my final leave. I stood kicking the doorstep impatiently, and thought she would *never* return; while my father continued to yell to me in tones that could be heard all over the neighborhood. This confusion added, if possible, to my already complete feeling of disgrace, and I was on the point of running back and leaving her, when she appeared with a package wrapped in paper. At that moment my father's massive form appeared from around the corner. Helen ran down the steps and, catching me up in her arms, kissed me several times, and as she let me go my father seized me by one arm—while I held the

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bundle tightly gripped under the other—and pulling me along, said: “You’ll pay dearly for these monkey-shines”—and I did!

I clambered in at the back end of the wagon, and once more we “pushed on.” Although I dreaded leaving the house, I was so mortified by what had occurred in the last few minutes that I would not have returned then, even if I could.

Settling myself down among the luggage in the back part of the wagon, we jogged along over the rough roads until about nightfall, when we drew up in front of a house out in the country, which reminded me somewhat of the detestable place we had left in the spring. We got out, and without going inside my father began unhitching the horse, and shouted to me, “Wake up there!” Again the thought—was this to be our home!

I went in to look the place over, but found it quite dark and gloomy inside. Returning to the wagon I got a candle, lighted it and groped about the rooms by its dim reflection, keeping one hand extended to avoid running into any obstruction. It was a queer, spooky looking old place, and a queer feeling of loneliness came over me. There were three rooms, with a little furniture and a great deal of rubbish about equally distributed throughout the house.

The package Helen gave me contained a lot of cakes, bread and butter, and fried chicken, all of which came in very handily at the supper hour.

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After retiring that night on an improvised bed, I ruminated over the events of the past few days, and especially of that particular day, and for the first time the thought struck me to run away, go back to Miss Whittemore and beg of her to hide me somewhere ! But how could I get back? for I had paid no attention to the roads, and had no idea how far it was to town. The thought was dismissed for the time being, but with a mental resolve to observe the roads carefully at the first opportunity of going over them. I felt sure that once in the town I could find the house, as the landlady's name was firmly fixed in my mind.

My father having been unable to get back his old position, had engaged to teach the district school near where we had settled for the winter. In fact, I presume he first engaged the school, and then the house,—with a view to close proximity, for there was no other obvious reason why anyone should hire such a place.

That winter I finished the "Third Reader," and was held to be one of the best "spellers" in the school—which, I fear, is not setting a very high standard upon the scholarship of the district. However, I remember hearing my father say that he received sixty dollars a month for teaching there, which he declared to be the highest price paid any teacher in that locality. There seemed to be a better class of boys and girls than I had found at Harisonville.

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One afternoon late in September, while going home alone from school,—my father having remained to help one of the pupils with his lessons,—I was overtaken by a bright-eyed, sweet-faced little girl whom I recognized as one of the scholars. After she caught up with me we walked along side by side for perhaps a minute or two—though it seemed much longer—before a word was spoken. She appeared out of breath, and, at first I thought she had slackened her pace merely to rest; but the evenness, with which she kept step with me encouraged the hope that she intended to say something when she got ready, though I thought she would never get ready. At length she drew a long breath, and giving a sudden puff, as if to indicate that she had recovered her breath, she said in a sweet, modest voice:

“Can I walk with you?”

“Yes, if you want to,” I said.

“Don’t you want me to?” she inquired.

“Oh, yes, I do,” I replied. Then we trudged silently on, while I devoted my attention to swinging my dinner-pail at brush and limbs that came within my reach along the edge of the road. I wanted to say something, but could think of nothing worth saying. At length she said:

“I know where *you* live.”

“How do you know?” I said.

“Because my papa owns the house, and I can see it from my bedroom window. When I was sick

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with whooping-cough I used to watch you go to school; and I could see you coming home; and then I knew it was time for my mamma to bring my glass of warm milk; and I wanted to hurry up and get well so I could go to school; and I asked my mamma about you, and she told me your name; and I was awfully glad when I got well so I could see you at school." She then drew another long breath and looked up at me as if it were my turn to speak.

"You know my name,—what's yours?"

"My name is Creta Fisher, and I have a little brother named Johnny Fisher."

"That's a prettier name than I've got," I said, rather regretfully.

"Oh, I think you've got an awful nice name," she said. "My mamma said—my mamma told me to ask you if you'd like to come to my birthday party. I'm nine years old—"

"Yes, I would, if my father will let me."

"Do you think he'd let you come if I asked him?" she said, looking up coyly.

"Maybe he would—will you ask him for me?"

"Yes, I'll ask him, and if he says no, I'll tell him he's naughty, for you know I'm not afraid of him outside of school. We're going to have a lovely time. Jane showed me the biggest cake with a lot of candles on it, and she told me not to let my mamma know I saw it—I'll give you a big piece if you'll come."

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She chatted along airily as we continued our way home, and upon arriving at our place we played out of doors until my father arrived. As he came up and entered the house she ran in after him, saying: "Oh, Mr. Hardwick, Bobby's coming to my party and we're going to have the loveliest time—you'll let him come, now won't you?"

"Well, yes, I s'pose if you say so, he's got to go," he said, good-naturedly.

"Oh, thank you, I knew you would let him." So saying, she flitted away across the meadow to her home.

I went to the party—the first I ever attended—and not knowing what to do or say, I sat back in a corner most of the evening, except when Creta came up—as she did every little while—and, catching me by the hand, dragged me into some game or other as her partner. But while not in action I was the most attentive observer in the room, and their little games and manners were all closely studied. Once Creta came up and said:

"I'm afraid you're not having a good time, are you?" I replied—truthfully—that it was the happiest night of my life.

Upon leaving for home that night she handed me a small package, saying: "This is for your papa; tell him I'm so glad he let you come."

I remember it was a beautiful moonlight night, and the children filed out, laughing and chattering noisily, some of them leaving in buggies that were

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in waiting, while others trudged away afoot, shouting back from the distance: "Good night, good night—had a great time."

With a joyous heart I ran across the meadow, and reaching home, handed the package to my father, eyeing it inquisitively as he unwrapped it. Inside was a large piece of frosted cake, with a tiny white candle rolled up in a piece of white paper, on which was written in a childish hand: "For letting Bobby come to my party."

During the fall, winter and early spring I frequently played and romped with Creta, and on pleasant days in the autumn we took long strolls together over the hills, gathering black walnuts, hazelnuts and hickorynuts. It was my duty and pleasure to go over every Sunday and have a "chicken-dinner"; and often on Saturdays she would come rushing over, and with flushed face and dancing eyes she would manage to say, between gasps for breath,— "My mamma—has—baked a nice cake for you—and wants you to come right straight over,"—always with sharply rising intonation and peremptory decision on the "right straight over."

I played with the boys at school during the recesses and the noon hour, but my eyes and thoughts were frequently found trespassing over on the girls' playground as Creta flitted about in childish glee, jumping the rope or playing blind-man's-buff. When, as occasionally happened, the boys and girls played together at noon, Creta

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usually marched straight up to me, and catching my arm she would start off with me, saying: "Come on, you're my partner"; which always pleased me greatly, for I thought every little boy in the school looked at me with envious eyes.

None of the schoolboys ever came to see me, excepting one—perhaps because I was too little—at least I hoped this was the reason. It was a sad day and chilly when we moved away early in the spring. Creta came over, and as she stood by while the wagon was being loaded, she looked very sweet, even in her despondency; and as we moved slowly away she waved her little hand and in a dear, whimpering sort of way, said: "Won't you come back sometime, Bobby?"

CHAPTER XII

THE PARTING MESSAGE OF MY DEAD MOTHER

ONE afternoon in April, after a long, weary trip, we drove up to a large farm-house near . . . Springs, Missouri, where I was left in charge of the owner, whose name was Vaughan—"Uncle Joe," as everyone called him. It was a delightful place, and his wife, who was perhaps twenty years younger than he, was a dear, motherly woman. They had a little girl, named Sallie, about ten years of age. After being there about two weeks I was taken ill, and Mrs. Vaughan—kind-hearted and romantic soul that she was—used to sit at my bedside for hours at a time and amuse me with stories about fairies and fairy-land. She told me that I would soon get well again, and that some day I would grow up to be a fine big man, and accomplish many wonderful feats hunting lions and bears and tigers; and that for my bravery the girls would all love me, and that I would have lots of sweethearts, and all that sort of thing, which awakened within me a new train of ideas.

I was a trifle dubious about the fairy-land, but

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thought I could take that old musket and enter any jungle without the slightest trepidation. Prior to that time my loftiest ambition had been to become a circus-rider. Having gone to a circus in Atlantic I was deeply impressed by the daring feats of the bare-back riders, and thereafter in my day-dreams, and night-dreams as well, had often pictured myself in a pair of balloon-legged pantaloons on the back of a white charger galloping around the ring, while I blithely tiptoed, and twisted and turned in harmony with the motion of the horse and the music, and occasionally turned a graceful somersault in the air or through a hoop held aloft by a beautiful damsel in fluffy skirts. Once I had ventured so far as to climb upon a high box and try the somersault feat, with the result that I landed in a heap on the top of my head in the grass.

But the slaughter of ferocious wild beasts now seemed more likely of accomplishment and I began to fancy myself shooting lions and tigers and seeing them drop dead just as they were in the act of attacking some adorable creature; then I would walk gallantly up and acknowledge my thanks to the sylph for the privilege, and pass on as if it were an everyday occurrence meriting no especial recognition.

Upon recovering from my illness I used to arm myself with a long crooked stick, as an imaginary gun, and take extended walks through the pastures

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and surrounding woods; and every time a rabbit jumped up I imagined him a fierce lion, and taking steady aim, expected to see him drop dead in his tracks,—but he never did.

As I rambled over the woodland surroundings I observed with keen interest the happiness of the birds as they flitted and twittered among the trees. I wished that I were as free and happy as they. It seemed like a new awakening, and once more life seemed worth living.

In reverting to the hard experiences of the past I thought perhaps they were a necessary schooling or preparation for this happier life. After a few weeks I actually, for the first time, began vaguely to meditate with some seriousness upon what I should be when I grew up, and wondered if I should ever be free from my father.

One day in June, at the end of two months, my father came and took me to the Springs, within half a mile of which he had bought eight acres of land from a farmer at fifty dollars per acre, giving one hundred dollars down and a mortgage for the balance. A few months later he sold half an acre for enough to pay off the mortgage.

He had already begun to build a house on a high elevation overlooking a small river on which the land bordered. Most of the land was heavily timbered, chiefly with hard maple, black walnut, and oak, and about six hundred yards down a gradual incline from the house there was a level piece of

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perhaps two acres, thickly set with large rock maples. The hills sloped down to this plot from the north and east sides, then running smoothly for about three hundred yards, the land inclined down to the river, only a short distance away. The main thoroughfare ran directly through the property, alongside the maple grove, which stood well above the road.

The building site selected was plainly visible from the road, and the landscape off to the west and south was the most picturesque of any in that section. The side hill in front of the house was partly cleared of timber, and directly back of it, to the north, was a great ledge of rock forming the crown of the bluff. The house, when completed, was constructed principally of rough hard-wood lumber, and although not a model of architectural beauty, it was comfortable, and rather conspicuous on account of its commanding site.

A large garden had been planted, and I was assigned to the post of head digger and weed-puller, and told to set to work and make up for the time I had been "loafing" and cherishing idle thoughts amid the foliage and green pastures.

As I grubbed away among the rocks and stumps on the southern hillside under a broiling July sun my poetical dreams of circus-riding, fairy-land, and wild-beast-hunting in the jungles suffered a rude awakening, and I found myself again in close communion with mother earth, and hedged about by

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stern paternal precepts, including strict orders not to go "funnin' or gunnin' " (how familiar this expression is to me!) during the daylight hours. I could forsake the garden patch only for my meals and drinks.

The nature of the work seemed to provoke an extraordinary thirst, and very frequently—especially when my father was away—I found myself growing thirsty again before getting back to the field after having gone to the house for a drink. I was either hungry or thirsty, generally both, most of the time, and the continuous response to the clamorous demands of these cravings interfered greatly with my work, until my father generously planted a large keg of water in the center of the garden, which he took good care to keep well filled.

A neighboring lad used to come over occasionally and regale me with stories of adventure and idleness, but my father didn't seem to fancy his presence, so he was warned not to interfere with my labors. I was forcibly reminded that luxury and indolence were the exclusive perquisites of the ultra-rich, and that my position was far removed from that class,—which latter statement seemed justified by the surroundings.

The weeds seemed unnecessarily obstinate, the hills of beans and potatoes were disgustingly close together, and the rows fatiguingly long. The time from breakfast to dinner was wearisome; from dinner to supper it was interminable, and from

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supper to breakfast, very short. Woodchucks and rabbits were my friends, and rainy days and Sundays my delights; for the spots where the woodchucks and rabbits ravaged the garden needed no hoeing, and on Sundays and rainy days I could rest, or ramble through the woods and occasionally dream of better days to come.

Often while roving through the woods or pastures, or fishing in the stream, I was conscious of a vague feeling that I should have been somebody other than I was, but seeing nothing in my accomplishments or environments to lend color to such a fancy the thought was always dismissed as a mental delusion.

At times I grew very despondent, and about concluded that destiny had predetermined my lot. Having sprung from nothing I should eventually return to nothing, and it seemed that my path through life would be conspicuous chiefly for the state of nothingness that marked it.

If there was one determination in my mind more grim and unchangeable than any other, it was that of celibacy; for the bringing of children into the world with no adequate means of support, and casting them adrift in their tender years to be abused and buffeted about appeared to me to be wholly wrong. The bitterness of my cup (by way of singular coincidence, the first thing that ever I remembered tasting in my mouth was bitter medicine) fixed my purpose not to inflict a similar con-

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dition upon posterity. I cursed the unkind fate that had forced such a heritage upon me, but time and again I thanked that implement of destiny which had so kindly and humanely borne my mother away to her heavenly rest before she had drained her cup of bitterness to its dregs.

I had heard my father speak of his proud Scottish ancestry, but I had regarded it merely as an hallucination, for there was nothing in his acts to justify a suspicion that he had sprung from anything more tractable or humane than a family of grizzly bears.

Among other things I firmly resolved that if ever I got away from my father and made a success in life, and rose to a place of any power or influence, my first thought would be to devote a portion of my efforts and worldly means, in a quiet way, to the cause of young children upon whom misfortune had bestowed her heritage of poverty and ill-treatment.

One Sunday afternoon early in September while lying stretched out upon the grass in the maple grove, thinking over the kind acts of Mrs. Vaughan, where I had been staying in the country, I vaguely wondered if she looked anything like my mother; when all at once it occurred to me that my father had never told me much about my mother's family or her childhood home. I bestirred myself at once, and went directly to the house to ask my father a few questions. He was out on the front porch

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reading a book, which fact did not make me hopeful of obtaining a satisfactory interview; but my curiosity was excited and I was determined to make an effort to satisfy it, even if I got thrashed in the attempt. So stalking boldly up to him I said, almost imperatively: "When did mother die?"

Closing his book he looked up at me in surprise, but to my astonishment he answered kindly: "Ten years ago last March, when you were a baby."

Thus reassured, I continued: "What did she die of?"

"Pneumonia—they called it quick consumption. I never told you, but her principal regret in dying seemed to be that of leaving you—you were so young."

"Do you remember anything she said to me?"

"Yes, son,"—and for the first time in my life I saw tears in his eyes,—“early one Sunday morning she asked me what day of the week it was. I told her it was Sunday. Oh, God! it was the saddest Sunday I ever knew—” and he burst out crying, while I stood looking on with great amazement.

Regaining his composure he went on: "Then she held up her left hand, and spreading her fingers apart she counted on them, pointing with the forefinger of her right hand,—‘S-u-n-d-a-y, M-o-n-d-a-y, T-u-e-s-d-a-y, then I’m going home’; and on Tuesday she died. Shortly after saying that, she asked for you to be brought to her, and throughout that

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day and the next two days she clung to you almost constantly, wailing over, and over, and over: 'My poor motherless babe, may God pity and protect you!' She expired peacefully with her arms clasping you to her breast. Up to that Sunday morning she had made a brave fight, but after that she gave up all hope, and I have always believed that her grief was so intense that she suddenly burst a blood vessel near her heart; for she sank back and passed away without a quiver."

"Where do her folks live?" I asked, as soon as I was able to speak.

"In Virginia," he said; and continuing: "At the age of nineteen I went from Vermont down into Virginia, and took up a winter school near a small town. One of the scholars was a delicate thirteen-year-old girl, with grey eyes and long golden hair. She lived in a large Colonial house on a magnificent old estate, where there were ninety-nine slaves, only a short distance from where I boarded. On my way to school in the morning I used to pass by her home, and usually found her waiting for me in the wide arched gateway in front of the house, and together we walked along to school. When the snow was deep and the roads unbroken I frequently picked her up and carried her in my arms over the drifted places. She was the prettiest, best-behaved, and the best-dressed girl in the school. Eight years later I returned to that locality and taught the same school another winter, spending many of my

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evenings at her home. The next spring we were married and moved away."

Then, rising from his chair, he went into the house, and soon returned with a small package, wrapped in a cloth soiled and discolored with age.

"There, take that and open it—I can't open it—it's your mother's Bible. She asked for it on that ill-fated Sunday morning and wrote something in it; then she tied a blue ribbon—blue was her favorite color—around it, saying 'it is sealed'; and from that day to this I've never had the heart to open it. Your mother was the gentlest woman I ever knew, and she never spoke a harsh word within my hearing. I've never been the same since she died. All the good that was in me appears to have perished with her." Then with a fresh burst of tears he went into the house.

With a thumping heart I gripped the package in my hands,—“My mother's Bible!” And to think, it had been with me, almost at my side, during all those hard years, and throughout that eventful journey over twelve States! For a long while I considered whether or not to unwrap it. It seemed like profaning the sanctuary of the dead! But remembering my father said she had written in it, I was overwhelmed with a longing to know if it was something concerning me. Slowly untying the string, I thought, “Would she be displeased if she could see me?” But something seemed to urge me on, and tell me there was a message inside. I un-

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wrapped the cloth and the brown covers were exposed to the light,—the first time since she died. There was the delicate blue ribbon, tied by her own hand—the faltering hand of my dying mother! It was too much—I could not unloose this seal! Pressing the little bowknot to my lips, I went into the house, threw myself face down across the bed and wept myself to sleep with my mother's Bible clasped to my breast, as she had embraced me, even in death.

Upon awakening I still held the book, and again something implored me to open it, and whispered inaudibly, "There's a message inside"; but to draw the ribbon and untie that bow seemed as impossible for me as it would have been to pull my heart out by its strings. Finally I slipped the ribbon off without untying the bow, and the book opened at the nineteenth chapter of Proverbs. There, exposed to view, lay a small envelope tinged slightly with age. I grasped it eagerly and turning it over I grew faint as I read the following lines written in a trembling hand:—

"It is a hard Fate that tears a nursing babe from the breast of a dying mother. To Thy tender mercies, Oh, God, I commit the charge of my poor motherless babe! But Thy will be done."

I then glanced at the two pages between which the envelope was found, and my eye rested on some unsteady pencil marks which obliterated the words of the eighteenth verse of Chapter XIX.

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Then the following words of the next verse were heavily underlined: "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment." I took the book with the envelope to my father in the next room, and handed him the paper, without a word. At sight of the writing, he started as if suddenly stung; then reading it over and over again he hung his head thoughtfully. I then laid the book before him. Shielding his face with his hands he uttered in choking sobs: "Her Bible!" When he had composed himself, I pointed to the mutilated passage, asking: "What has she marked out here?" Knowing his Bible almost by heart, he repeated the words slowly, as if he read through the pencil marks: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Then laying the open book on the table beside which he sat, he placed the envelope in it and leaning forward, burying his face in his hands as they rested upon the open leaves, he sobbed piteously.

Then turning to me he said: "I see it all now; it was for that and nothing else that your mother feared to die. And her spirit has haunted me all these years, while I've wandered this country over in search of peace, but my soul has found no rest!" I was utterly dumfounded by his change of demeanor, for it was the first word or act of humility that he had ever shown toward me. Her parting message had shattered the cast-iron armor that incased his heart, and from that day he never struck me.

CHAPTER XIII

AN IMPORTANT REAL ESTATE TRANSACTION—ALSO AN IMPORTANT LITTLE GIRL

ON account of a severe punishment inflicted upon a large, unruly boy in a district school near the Springs, where my father was teaching, there was quite an uproar among the parents and friends, and some talk of damage suits and personal violence. I was in the school-room at the time and witnessed the affray. It was merely a question of who should run the school,—my father, or the big twenty-year-old bully, with the result that the young rascal was soundly thrashed and put out of doors.

My father became alarmed lest they should bring a damage suit against him and seize the property, so, going to a Justice of the Peace, by the name of Welfleet, for counsel, he was advised to deed it over to another person, who in turn could convey it back to me. A warranty deed was thereupon duly executed by my father and the legal title to the property passed to the Justice of the Peace, who transferred it to me. In order to

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avoid any possibility of seizure of the property upon any claim for damages, the Justice advised my father to sign papers relinquishing his rights of guardianship over me, so far as they concerned the possession or disposal of the land. The Justice wrote out the necessary papers in order that the Probate Court might appoint him my legal guardian. After they were all made out we took our turns at signing them.

I remember signing my name to a paper, and holding up my right hand before another man who was called in, saying that I acknowledged the Justice to be my legal guardian, and so forth. The man who came in from outside was called a "notary," and I noticed he also signed the documents; but it was not clear to me then why he had to sign them, for he had nothing to do with the transaction.

My father handed some money to the Justice, who said he would send the papers to the County seat to be recorded. It seemed to me a very impressive ceremony attended with much discussion, and I couldn't see why it was necessary to make such a fuss over an old hilly piece of land.

I did not like the looks of Mr. Welfleet, and was not elated over his becoming my legal guardian, although it was explained to me that as such he had no power or control over me.

As long as his authority was confined to the handling of the property, I thought it did not make

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much difference. He was a middle-aged man, and had some kind of a nervous affection in one of his eyes which caused it to twitch and blink whenever he talked. He was arbitrary and seemed to have things his own way, for my father did not know much about legal matters.

When we returned to the house there were two men sitting on the front doorstep, one of whom proved to be the father of the boy who had been flogged. The other was a lawyer from some neighboring town. They were soon engaged in a heated argument with my father, during which I heard one of them say something about "a thousand dollars damages," which struck me as an almost unthinkable sum of money. I was greatly alarmed for fear there would be a three-handed combat when I saw my father shake his fist defiantly at one of the men, and heard him say that if he had to do it over again he would "lay it on twice as hard."

He always had a felicitous way of acting as the defending attorney, judge and jury in adjudicating any of his acts of violence, with the unfailing result that he was sure to be exonerated in his own estimation, with regrets that he had not done worse; but this time he was certainly in the right. At length the men left the house, and the stormy interview was attended by no worse result than a rhetorical assault in which I would say that the honors were about equally divided.

During my father's long years of experience as a

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teacher he had been the hero of many battles in this sort of warfare, and could hold his own very creditably against all comers. The affair at the school gave rise to so much commotion in the neighborhood that he thought best to close the school, particularly as there were less than two more weeks of the term.

Before taking my final departure from the old place on the southern hillslope where we spent two years, I cannot refrain from relating a little incident in which the old musket figured. After reaching the age of ten my father permitted me to use the gun, which in the meantime had been provided with a new tube. I had become quite skillful in handling it (the barrel being only thirty-six inches long) and a great deal of rabbit meat and other small game found its way into our larder as the result of my prowess and marksmanship. My father had always been very particular to have me unload the gun when I brought it into the house, and in the winter when I returned home from hunting with the gun loaded it was my custom either to shoot it off or draw the charge.

One morning late in December, just after a heavy fall of snow, my father was out strolling about the premises and seeing a rabbit in the heavy underbrush on the sidehill out east of the house he came rushing in and called, "Bob, load the gun and come out here *quick!*" Not knowing what he had "*treed*" I rushed for the gun and proceeded to load it; but

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in my excitement I put the shot in first, and rammed it down hard. Then, putting in a charge of powder, I tamped the wadding down lightly the same as I always did over the shot, to prevent recoil. At that moment I realized that I had transposed the charges and got them in wrong end first, but my father was calling to me to "Hurry up or he'll be gone!" so gathering up the gun I ran out, purposely omitting to put on a percussion cap. I was hoping to scare the game off in some way without getting a chance to shoot at it, and thus not be obliged to disclose the fact that I had made a blunder in loading, or overlooked putting on the cap. I followed close behind as my father led the way. The snow was soft and clinging and the brush and trees were festooned in dazzling white.

After going about three hundred yards my father crept along stealthily, waving one hand behind to caution me that the prey was close at hand. But whether it was a rhinoceros, or only a harmless little rabbit, I didn't know. Stopping short in full view of the rabbit about forty yards distant, he stooped down and pointing ahead under the bending brush and limbs, whispered, "See 'im? See 'im?" There sat the rabbit, sure enough, and against the white snow under that bower of snow-laden bushes he could easily have been seen at five times the distance. I craned my neck about, ostensibly in search of the game, saying aloud (hoping to scare the rabbit away): "Where? *Where is he?*" With

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a signaling gesture of his hand my father said softly: "Sh-sh-sh, be careful, you'll scare him—" and, pointing the way, said: "See 'im there? See 'im?" I moved around to get a more unobstructed view, kicking up the dead brush and leaves under the snow as I did so, but that cussed rabbit still sat there, as if he were frozen to the ground.

My father having become disgusted with my poor eyesight, said: "Give *me* the gun—I'll show you where he is." It instantly occurred to me to cock the hammer of the gun, then when he snapped it and it failed to go off, I would set in to look for the percussion cap in the snow; but upon drawing back the hammer I almost collapsed when I saw there was a cap on the tube, and remembered having set the gun away the day before without drawing the charge. The gun therefore contained a double charge of shot,—rammed down hard and fast, with a full charge of powder on each side, front and back. I gasped and tried to stop him, but in a jiffy he had put the gun loosely to his shoulder and off it went with a boom before I could even get out of the way. The gun flew out of his hands, over his head, and landed perhaps ten feet behind him. After floundering about in the snow and vowing that he was killed, he got up and limped back to the house without saying another word. The matter was not mentioned again until next day when, as he was bathing a slight flesh wound on his cheek and viewing himself in the mirror, he

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said: "Bob, does that old gun always kick like that?"

After securing a position for me as errand boy at the large new summer hotel which had just been completed at the Springs, my father went away to look for a fall and winter school, and I worked there through the spring and summer. That season many fashionable people came to the place, and a number of cottages were built among the surrounding hills.

I well remember one elderly gentleman who, having heard of the great curative powers of the spring water, brought his wife there from the South to be cured of rheumatism. I was standing on the front veranda of the hotel when the stage drove up, from which they alighted. The scene was made noticeable by the fact that the lady was carried from the stage-coach into the hotel by her husband and the two servants—a man and a maid—who accompanied them. They were assigned to the best suite of rooms in the house, and I was appointed to the task of answering their call for any errand-service they might require.

The lady was frail and was confined to her bed for many days. Her hair was prematurely white, and she looked as if she had suffered much pain. She was very kind and always said, "Thank you, Bobby," when I performed any task for her, no matter how trivial. The maid was churlish, and appeared to be jealous of me when her mistress thanked me for any little service.

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The husband, whose name was Holliston, hired the best team of horses in the place and spent much of his time in the afternoons driving with his coachman, while the morning hours were chiefly devoted to reading to his wife.

It was my pleasant duty to bring a bottle of water fresh from the spring for Mrs. Holliston three times a day, and sometimes oftener. She improved very rapidly and in less than ten days was able to sit up in a large easy chair.

One afternoon when I had brought a bottle of water from the spring I rapped gently on her door, but instead of her maid answering it as she had usually done, I heard Mrs. Holliston's voice say, "Come in." Opening the door I set the bottle down inside and turned to go out, when she called from the next room:

"Is that you, Bobby?"

"Yes, ma'am, it's me," I responded.

"Won't you come in here a moment, please?"

I was surprised, and stood for an instant wondering if I had left any mission unfulfilled. Then I went into her room, where she sat in a large chair looking out at the window. At my approach she turned and smiled, which reassured me. Closing her book, she sighed deeply as she laid it down. The maid was not in the room, which made me feel more at ease. I stood awaiting her command, and, resting her chin in her hand, she looked intently at me for at least half a minute without

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saying a word. Her look was so benevolent that I was induced to wonder if she had ever spoken an unkind word to anyone. After scrutinizing me carefully she said:

"Bobby, I have just been reading a very sad book. It is about a little orphan boy who at a tender age was thrown upon the world and had to earn his own living. The people for whom he worked were very unkind to him."

Her eyes had moistened, and she wiped them with her handkerchief. "As I saw you coming up from the spring just a few moments ago, I wondered if you have a nice home with a good mother—are your parents living, Bobby?"

"No, ma'am—yes, ma'am—my father is living, but my mother is dead."

"Oh, I'm so sorry; and your father, does he help you?"

"Yes, ma'am, but he's gone away, and I'm working for myself."

"How old are you, Bobby?"

"I'm twelve years this month."

"And you have to make your own way in the world alone?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How old were you when your mamma died?"

"I was a little baby—I never saw her—I don't remember."

"And was your father kind to you?"

"Yes, ma'am, he was, sometimes."

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"And sometimes he wasn't—is that it?"

"Well, he wasn't always kind to me—when he was cross."

"Have you no home at all?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have—no, I have no home now—the house is locked up. When my father went away I came here to work."

"Do you know any of your father's people?"

"I have seen some of them, but I don't know where they are now."

"Do you know any of your mother's family?"

"No, ma'am, I never knew any of them—I only know they lived somewhere in Virginia, and their name was Rector." At the mention of these names she started, as if to rise; then drooping her head, she sat for a moment in silent thought. Then gazing earnestly at me she said: "Are you quite sure that was your mother's name, and that she lived in Virginia?"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm sure. My father told me they moved away from there after they were married."

"What is your last name—your father's name?"

"Hardwick—Bob Hardwick—is my name."

"Hardwick—Hardwick," she repeated—"that name is not familiar. How much do they give you here, Bobby?"

"I get a dollar a week." Her hand dropped to her lap as if suddenly paralyzed, and she groaned softly as she repeated the words—"A dollar a week!"

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"I believe you may go now, Bobby. I feel a little wearied from sitting up too long; but I should like to see you again tomorrow about this time, when I hope to feel stronger. If you see my maid in the hall or downstairs, please send her to me. I told her not to interrupt me until I sent for her."

As I passed out, the maid was seated by the door in the outside hallway, and I conveyed Mrs. Holliston's message. She grunted and shrugged her shoulders disdainfully, but said nothing.

Among the notable guests at the hotel, in addition to the Hollistons, was a family named Hewlett from St. Louis, consisting of the father and mother and two children—a boy and girl. The boy, who was perhaps fourteen years old, was about my size,—for I was rather large for my years,—while his sister was about two years younger. I thought they all appeared aristocratic and snobbish, except the little girl, who was gentle and winsome. Her hair was of chestnut brown, and hung in long natural waves down her back. Her expressive brown eyes shone through long dark lashes that embellished them like a beautiful picture in an appropriate setting. She was the guiding spirit and center of attraction of every gathering of children, whether on the street or around the hotel. Her little nose turned up at the point just enough to give it a saucy look, though in this respect it belied her real character.

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It was a treat to me to see her trip lightly around on the veranda or through the parlors and courtesy gracefully when addressed by an older person. A cheerful word and a pleasant smile was her invariable response when spoken to by anyone and her face would light up in a charming way that made her sweet to look upon. There was a gentle dignity in her attitude toward those beneath her station, and she was a stranger to the use of a spiteful word. I often caught my eyes following her plump little figure with rapt attention as she flitted softly about like a bee in a clover patch, extracting honey from every flower, yet giving nothing but sweetness in return.

I wondered if she had ever known an unhappy moment, and compared her light-hearted and care-free life with my luckless fate. It did not seem possible to conceive of a more extravagant contrast.

How graciously all Nature had smiled upon that lovely being, and how uncompromisingly Fortune had frowned upon me! Yet I would not have robbed her of a single gift even to my own enrichment, for I was strong and rugged from long accustomed hardship and privation, and able to wield my burden; while she was tender, and unaccustomed to harsh words or cruel acts.

She was her mother's pride, her father's idol, and her brother's companion; and she wore the mantle with natural grace. In my situation I

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should no more have dared address her—except in regard to the performance of some menial service—than I would have presumed to attempt friendly discourse with some empyreal being. But I used to envy her brother as he strolled arm-in-arm with her up and down the veranda.

With the exception of the little girl, the Hewletts did not mingle much with the guests, other than the Hollistons, with whom they seemed on intimate terms. Mr. Holliston and Mr. Hewlett frequently went out riding together, and I often saw Mrs. Hewlett in Mrs. Holliston's room when I carried up her bottle of water. Once Mrs. Hewlett had asked if I would please bring her a bottle of fresh water from the spring, and acknowledged the service in a gracious manner.

I was returning from the spring with a bottle of water shortly after supper on the evening following the interview with Mrs. Holliston, and saw Miss Hewlett and her brother ahead walking slowly toward the hotel. The board sidewalk was about wide enough for three persons to walk abreast. Upon discovering them ahead I slackened my gait and sauntered along perhaps fifty yards behind them as they trudged leisurely on, chatting and laughing, and swinging their clasped hands backward and forward between them. I was thinking of my sister's good fortune and prospective inheritance, and how happy I should be if we had a birthright that would entitle us to hold

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up our heads proudly before the world, and the means with which to pay our way wherever our inclinations might lead us. But knowing nothing of my antecedents, and earning only a dollar a week, such fanciful ideas did not seem to harmonize with my situation.

I was puzzled to account for Mrs. Holliston's evident surprise when I mentioned my mother's native State and family name. Could it be that she knew my mother? If so, would she tell me something about her,—and was it for that purpose that she wished to see me again tomorrow? Was it possible that there was any tangible basis for the daydreams in which I had often indulged my thoughts while on my rambling tours through the woods?

While musing thus I unconsciously quickened my step and upon looking up I noticed that I had nearly overtaken the pair in advance. Then I saw three boys—one of whom I knew to be a rough character—coming from the opposite direction, with perhaps twenty paces separating them from us. The three boys had locked arms and were talking and laughing boisterously. Instead of breaking ranks or giving way on the sidewalk they held together and bumped into the young couple. With a vulgar oath one of them said:

“Why in hell don't you take up the whole sidewalk?” I stopped close behind to see what the outcome would be, and after some words one of the ruffians struck young Hewlett with a heavy stick

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he was carrying, and his sister shrieked with terror. Dropping my water bottle I sprang forward, and getting into the midst of the fray, I grappled with the boy who had struck the blow. We fell on the edge of the sidewalk and in the struggle both rolled off onto the ground. One of the other boys came to his companion's rescue and in the course of the scramble I was struck on the head and received an ugly knife wound in the left leg.

The town constable then appeared and the three boys beat a hasty retreat. When I looked around young Hewlett and his sister had disappeared, and I assumed that while the two boys were scuffling with me he had embraced the opportunity of getting his sister, and incidentally himself, away in safety.

After hurriedly explaining the matter to the constable and telling him I was severely wounded, he picked me up and carried me to the hotel. On the way we met young Hewlett returning with two men on the dead run. They stopped and came with us to the hotel, where I was temporarily placed on a cot, while the doctor was summoned. There was a great commotion in the house and everybody seemed to be asking everybody else if I were dead, and how it all happened. My wound bled profusely, though it was not necessarily dangerous, and after administering an anæsthetic the doctor treated it.

When I opened my eyes after the operation I saw the stern, anxious face of the doctor sitting at my bedside. His first words were—"Well, did you have

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a good sleep?" For a minute or so I couldn't seem to get my bearings, or figure out why he was sitting there. I felt weak and nauseated. Then I remembered the paper funnel stuffed with ether-soaked cotton that he had pressed to my face, and that I had gradually descended into a deep well, while bells tinkled faintly in the distance. I kept sinking lower, while the light at the opening above me grew farther and farther away. The sound of bells had grown fainter until at last the opening closed above me, the sound of the bells died out, and I knew no more. Then I remembered how the people rushed about as I was carried into the hotel, and the whole scene of the disaster dawned upon me.

Turning down the light the doctor soon left the room, and I was alone. He had shown me a small round box containing some pellets, with a glass of water on the table at the bedside, and told me to dissolve one of these in the water and drink it if I had any difficulty in going to sleep.

I put my hand down to my bandaged leg and it felt like a big roll of cotton. I began to think over the incidents of the early evening, and what the people would think of me for getting into a street fight. The proprietor would probably be angry at me for causing so much annoyance in the house, and I should doubtless be discharged in disgrace. I wondered if he would let me keep my room until I got well, and if anyone was enough interested in me to take care of me while I was sick. My father had

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gone away, I knew not where, and I was among strangers who cared nothing for me. All the money I had was the dollar due me for the previous week, and this would, no doubt, be withheld to pay for my room while I was sick. I had no money to pay the doctor, and I feared he would not come again. If they turned me out into the street, where could I go in my weakened condition for shelter and food?

It was late in the night and the only sound I could hear was the rain drops beating against the little window on the opposite side of the room. The world outside seemed cheerless and unfriendly, while inside the room it was lonely and painful. As I lay there on my back and looked about at the vacant walls and bare floor I thought over the many hardships of my previous existence, and of the empty prospects that the future now held forth. All hope seemed swallowed up in this misfortune, and life did not seem worth the struggle it involved. I thought back to that night in May and of my mother in her heavenly domain, and wondered if she were conscious of my loneliness and suffering. I turned and looked at the sleep-producing medicine on the table, and an awful feeling came over me which made me shudder with horror. I shook it off and closed my eyes in a sort of stupor.

Suppose I should go to sleep and never wake up! No one would ever miss me! Opening my eyes I put out my hand toward the table, but again I shivered, and drew it back quickly. My leg had

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begun to pain me almost unbearably, and there seemed to be no likelihood of sleep. In a sudden fit of pain and despair I reached over, picked up the box, and turning it into the glass, I swallowed the whole contents quickly, then pulled the covers up over my head.

As I thought of the probable results I immediately repented, with the thought—"God will never forgive me for being such a coward!" Throwing back the covers I cried out, "Help! Help!" Then hearing no sound, I shouted again; but my voice was weak and hoarse, so nobody responded. I pounded on the wall as hard as my feeble strength would permit, then reaching up I pounded on the headboard of the bed; but the noise was muffled and did not penetrate far. Already I was beginning to feel drowsy and numb. Reaching out my arm I had barely enough strength to give the table a shove, and it turned over with a crash as the glass and the lamp struck the floor. Then mustering all my strength I gave my body a lurch, and turning over I rolled out on the floor in the darkness. By this time my senses were so deadened that I felt no pain, and stretching myself out face down upon the bare floor I became unconscious.

CHAPTER XIV

WORKING FOR MY BOARD AND CLOTHES

WHEN next I opened my eyes I was in a strange room having two large windows, and the doctor was leaning over me, while two or three unknown persons stood by; but I have no remembrance of what was said then. The first words I recall were those of the doctor—

“Why did you do it?” but not getting his meaning I closed my eyes and made no response. I afterward learned that the noise from the overturned table had been heard in the room below, and someone coming up to learn the cause of the commotion had found me and summoned the doctor. Fortunately, the light had been extinguished by the fall, and did not catch the oil.

In the morning a nurse came, with white apron and cap, and told me she had been sent by a friend of mine to take care of me. Shortly afterward Mr. Hewlett came in, and grasping my hand firmly, said: “Young man, I owe you a lasting debt of gratitude.” I managed to tell him I was sorry to have made such a disturbance, and when he left I asked

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if he would see that one of the boys brought water for Mrs. Holliston. He nodded his head, saying: "I will go directly and take some water to her myself."

Nearly everybody in the hotel, including Mrs. Hewlett, called on me during the forenoon and all congratulated me on my "heroism," as they called it. I said that I had merely done my duty in protecting young Hewlett and his sister against those rowdies. But I appeared to be quite the hero of the hour. During the day I received a large bunch of flowers with a card attached, on which was written—"Brave boy! You have my admiration and respect.—Mrs. Holliston." I pressed both the bouquet and the card to my cheek and wept with joy.

Mr. Hewlett came in again and sat by my bedside for nearly an hour, and upon leaving he assured me that as an humble acknowledgment of his gratitude, his own son should bring Mrs. Holliston water from the spring as many times a day as she wished it until I had quite recovered.

Next day Mrs. Hewlett brought her little girl in to see me, and as I saw her approach with outstretched hand, smiling face and dimpled cheeks, I made a complete baby of myself by bursting out crying the instant I touched her hand. However, I quickly recovered my composure, and in her inimitable way she told me how grateful she was, and apologetically explained that she did not come in to see me the first day after the affair because

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she had been so unnerved by it that she had not left her room the entire day. As she was leaving she added shyly, "I want mamma to bring me in to see you again."

One morning a messenger came into my room, and laying a dainty white envelope on the stand at my bedside, passed out, remarking that he hoped I would soon get well. The superscription read: "Master Bob Hardwick," plainly written in a feminine hand.

"Who can be writing to me?" I thought. I tore the note open with eager interest, and was almost dumfounded upon finding a new crisp ten dollar bill laid in the fold of a piece of note paper, with the words: "Your salary is raised, beginning from July 1, and this is the sum due you as back pay." I didn't know how much it had been raised, and was so delighted with the "back pay" that I didn't much care. Can it be, I mused to myself, that Mrs. Holliston has asked them to raise my salary? But why should the increase in pay date back to July 1, for I had already drawn up to within a week of the accident?

At the end of two weeks I was out, and the manager thought I had better spend a couple of days in the open air before undertaking my duties again. I insisted, however, upon performing any needed service for Mrs. Holliston, and the first thing after getting about I went to the spring and brought a bottle of water to her. In response to

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my knock at her door the maid appeared, and astonished me by condescending to say, "Good morning," in a pleasant manner. "I'm glad you're up again, for I hate that impertinent Hewlett boy. He thinks he owns the whole hotel."

But the fact that she had not fallen in love with him did not make me respect him any the less. In the afternoon I took a message to Mrs. Holliston, and upon opening the door, the maid said: "My mistress wants to see you."

I passed through into the front room and found her seated in an easy chair with a beautiful lace shawl thrown loosely about her shoulders.

"Good afternoon, my little hero," she said. I was so abashed at being called the hero of a lady of her quality that I hung my head and must have appeared very awkward in acknowledging so graceful a compliment.

"You carry your honors with becoming modesty," she said. "At the time of coming to this hotel I had no thought of being honored by having so distinguished a courier at my service in bringing me healing water from the spring." I thought she must be referring to the bottle that Mr. Hewlett brought—or was she making fun of me? It must be the former, because she was too gentle and good to wound the feelings of anybody.

"It was kind of Mr. Hewlett to bring you the water," I said.

"Yes, and it's kind of you, too; that water has

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done me a world of good. I haven't felt so well in ten years." She removed her feet from a footstool and drawing it up beside her chair, asked me to sit down on it, which I was glad to do, for this being my first day out I was beginning to feel a little unsteady on my feet.

Placing her hand on my head, she said: "Bobby, did you ever think you would like to live in the South?"

"I don't know, I've never been there. My father took me on a long journey, but we didn't go to the South." Then I told her briefly about our wanderings.

"And during all those travels he didn't take you to your mother's old home?"

"No, ma'am."

"I believe you told me the other day that your father never talked much about your mother's family—do you know the reason?"

"No, he only told me that she lived in a large house with an arched gate in front, and that her father had ninety-nine slaves."

"Pardon me,—you say they had ninety-nine slaves?"

"Yes, ma'am, and my father said that when the snow was deep he used to carry her to school."

Seeing that she was deeply absorbed in thought, I hesitated and waited for her to look up. After musing a moment, she said, as if speaking to herself: "Yes, it may be the same."

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"Why, you didn't know my mother, did you?"

"No, but I think I know who she was. While you were ill I wrote a letter about the matter, but have received no reply."

Just then Mrs. Hewlett came in and I left the room. "Who can this woman be?" I queried as I walked slowly down the steps to the office. I sauntered down the street, and as I turned to go toward the spring, met my father on the sidewalk. The first thing he said was, "Why, what makes you look so pale—are you ill?"

"No, but I *have* been." After telling him the circumstances he said: "Well, I might have known better; town is no place for a boy. Anyway, the work you are doing is too servile, and they don't pay you enough."

"Oh, they've raised me," I interrupted; and pulling out the envelope containing the note and ten dollar bill, I handed it to him. He read the note, and then looking the bill over, said: "That's not old Bickerstaff's writing, and he never saw that money. If he had, you would never have seen it."

I looked at him in surprise, without understanding what he meant. Handing me back the money and note he said abruptly: "Come, let's get your things."

"Are you going to take me away?" I asked.

"Yes, I have engaged a place for you in the country where you will have a good home. That

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hotel is no place for you, and I should have known better than to put you there."

Much as I disliked to leave, I knew there was no use arguing with my father, for it would only tend to confirm him in his opinion. We went to the hotel, and going to the office, he inquired: "Is there anything due this boy?" The clerk looked at his book and said: "Yes, one dollar for the week he worked before he was sick."

"Is that all?" said my father.

"Yes, that's all; but I don't know if the doctor's bill has been paid."

"Do I owe you anything for his board or care while he was sick?" The clerk went to the back office, and returning, said: "No, nothing."

He then handed me a silver dollar, and I went to pack my clothes, which I brought out in a small bundle wrapped in brown paper. I ran upstairs to say good-by to Mrs. Holliston, but she had gone out driving with Mrs. Hewlett. My heart sank within me, for I wanted so much to see her before leaving. The maid told me she was not expected back for two hours, and there was no use asking my father to wait that long, as he said we must leave that afternoon.

We went to the doctor's office and found that my bill had been settled by Mr. Hewlett. As we came out on the street we met Miss Hewlett and her brother. They were quite astonished at seeing me out and inquired how I was feeling. I told

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them I was going away, and Miss Hewlett said: "Oh, I'm so sorry"—which made me both sorry and glad. As we started down the street, leaving the two children standing on the sidewalk looking after us, I heard the little girl say: "Poor little fellow!" I asked where the wagon was, and my father said the horse and wagon had been sold.

"How are we going?" I asked.

"Afoot," he said.

"I'm afraid I can't walk; this is my first day out."

"Well," he said, "we'll take it slowly and try to get along the best we can."

So with my little bundle of earthly possessions under my arm, I struggled along with him, and by nightfall we reached Mr. Vaughan's house, where I had stayed two years before. At sight of the house my heart throbbed with joy, and I asked if I was to work there; but the thrill was of short duration, for he told me that the destination was yet a long way off, and that we were only to stay here over night. Mrs. Vaughan appeared delighted to see me, and after giving me a motherly hug and kiss she led me by the hand into the house, and prepared a good supper for us.

She made a large dish of toasted biscuit and cream, as she had done for me many times while I was there before, and the like of which no one else ever made. When I told her of my illness she seemed provoked because I had not let her

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know, so that she might have done something for me.

Early next morning we started off, and when I went to get my bundle there were two, for she had prepared a lunch of fried chicken, bread and jam, cake, and other delicacies.

We trudged along slowly in the hot sun with short resting spells, until nearly noon, when we sat down in the shade of a large oak tree by the road and ate our lunch, after which I lay down and slept a little while. When my father woke me we continued on our way.

Late the next afternoon we came up to a large old-fashioned house that stood back about an eighth of a mile from the road. There was a row of thrifty maples on each side of the way leading from the main road up to the house, which was partly obscured by a grove of cottonwood trees. There were five or six other buildings nearby, such as the barn, smoke-house, henhouse, brandy house, etc., all built of hewn logs. There was a large orchard of perhaps fifteen acres, and altogether it was the best looking place we had seen since leaving the Springs.

When my father told me this was to be my home, I felt that he had made a happy selection. Upon reaching the house he rapped at the front door, but getting no response we went around to the kitchen. A middle-aged woman came to the door and told us that Mr. North had gone to Orrick, but would soon be home.

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"Would ye like to go in and set down?" she asked. We followed her into a large front room. It was furnished with a bed (every room in the house, except the kitchen, had a bed in it), three old chairs, a small table, an old writing desk, two or three antiquated family portraits, a rag carpet and a fireplace, without any mantel.

"What may yer names be?" asked the woman; and upon being told she gave a satisfied grunt and went out. I sat there staring around, wondering if I should like the place on better acquaintance, when a door slammed in the next room, and a conversation ensued between two women. The partition door was slightly ajar, and we could hear them distinctly.

"I guess thet's thet boy come with his father—" said the woman who had shown us in.

"What's he look like?" inquired the other.

"He's a right smart chunk of a lad—not quite as big as Johnny was. D' ye want to go in 'n see 'em?"

"No, I hain't no time to be pestered by the likes of 'em. I don't know what Bill wanted 'im fer anyhow. I'll boun' they've tracked a lot o' dirt in on my new carpet—why didn't ye put 'em in the kitchen? This makes the third one o' them foundlin's thet Bill's hed around here. The fust one got in a fight over at Brown's Crossin' and 'most killed Tom Lillard's boy with a big knife, and t'other one, ye know, stold a hoss and got put in jail,—and I reckon this'n won't be here more'n a month



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afore he's stealin' somethin' er murderin' someone."

Just then the voices were lowered and the partition door closed softly, and we heard the bolt slide on the other side. I looked at my father and he wonderingly returned my gaze. I wished myself back at the hotel. Presently he said: "I swow, that's funny—" but I couldn't see anything funny about it.

"Are you going to leave me here?" I said.

"Wait—we'll see when Mr. North comes."

Just then we heard a horse's step outside, and the rider dismounted and entered the next room, through the front door.

"He's *in thar*," said the woman.

"*Who's in thar?*"

"Thet new foundlin' o' your'n; he's a-settin' thar with his pa—leastwise thet big man thet pretended to be his pa."

The bolt slid back, the door opened, and there before us stood a florid man of about sixty years, of medium height and thick-set. He had long iron-grey hair with a massive forehead, and little ears. His small grey eyes peered out over a large red nose and wide thick-lipped mouth. His three front teeth—one above and two below—dove-tailed together, so that the point of his protruding chin almost rubbed the end of his nose. When he recognized my father a smile began at the corners of his mouth and gradually spread over his whole face.

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Advancing, he said: "Wa'al I see ye've got here,—and this is the boy, is it? He's a right peart lookin' chap, 'n I reckon he c'n toat water 'n wood enough fer me and Ann. Ye see I use to hev eleven children in this house—nine gals 'n two boys. They've all gone off 'n got married, so Ann 'n me 's all alone. We ain't got nuthin' to do more'n look at each other, 'n sometimes we get almighty fired tired o' doin' thet."

Coming up to me, he put out his great brawny hand, which I took, and immediately regretted, for when he closed up his blunt fingers my hand felt as if it was in a vise, and I almost cried out with pain. Then releasing my hand he gave me a slap on the back that relieved me of what little breath I had left. However, he intended no harm,—that being merely his customary form of greeting.

Bill North, as everybody called him, was reputed to be the richest man within ten miles of Orrick, and although he could scarcely read, or write his own name, he held mortgages or Trust Deeds on a great number of the farms in that section of the country. Starting with nothing—not even an education—he had prospered there for upwards of forty years, and after bringing up a family of eleven children and giving every one of them an improved 160-acre farm, a team, wagon and harness, a cow, three hogs, and one hundred dollars in gold, he still had enough left to retain the distinction of being the richest man in that locality.

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After talking a few minutes, he looked toward the door in which he had stood when I made my first mental picture of him, and calling to his wife, he said: "Ann, come in here!" For a moment there was no response, then again—this time louder and more peremptorily: "Ann, come in here!" Another dead silence of a few seconds, then a chair dragged on the floor in the next room and footsteps were heard coming slowly toward the door. It opened and there stood the figure of the woman whose whining, squeaky voice we had heard a short time before. In one hand she held her knitting,—in the other a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. Her scattering white hairs were twisted up into a knot about the size of a walnut, on top of her small head. Her face had a sort of false appearance, and yet looked as if it were apologizing for what was behind it. She had a low narrow pointed forehead, and her eyes were listless and bloodshot. A nose that was rather shapely—excepting for a wart which adorned one side—turned up as if in fear of falling down behind her lower lip, which rounded out in a basket shape so far beyond the upper lip that the two looked as though they had been made at different times and for different people. A single tooth protruded from behind the lower lip and rested against the outside of the upper, as if to hold it in place.

From the line of her hair down to the bottom of her upper lip her face appeared lean and peaked;

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then it began to fleshen up, and the fat hung in rolls under her chin, which appeared to be merely an extension of the lower lip. When she opened her mouth to speak she looked as if something pained her and she were going to cry.

It was one of those faces that require a long time fully to explore; and, like some great paintings, every time it was looked carefully over some new feature would appear. It reminded one of a caricature of a grotesquemask. From her shoulders down to her hips she was shaped after the order of a flour-barrel, and I presume she weighed not less than two hundred and thirty pounds.

Although, as might be surmised, she was not prepossessing in appearance, her disposition was even less attractive. Though the mother of eleven grown children, she was almost devoid of any humane or motherly instinct. She was penurious even with her own sons and daughters when they came to see her, and when occasionally her husband would divide a small sum of money equally among them she would berate him for his prodigality and tell him—"They all have a-plenty, and ye better save yer money agin old age. Nobody never helped us when we was young, and ye're a-spilin' of them gals by givin' 'em money fer their wuthless husbands to spend."

When Mrs. North appeared at the door Mr. North placed his hand on my shoulder and turning toward her, he said: "Ann, how d' ye like the

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looks o' this boy?" Putting on her spectacles and adjusting them carefully she scrutinized me from head to foot, then taking off her "specs" and screwing up her face in a scornful way, she said:

"Wa'al, I reckon he ain't no wus'n t'other two was."

"Don't ye reckon he'll do?" queried Mr. North, and as she turned to go back to her seat she said: "I hain't nuthun' mo' to say."

Mr. North apologetically remarked—"She ain't in a good mood today."

My father asked about the other two boys, and Mr. North said he had got them in Orrick; that they were waifs taken off the streets of New York and sent to the country to be placed in homes to work for their board and clothes.

"Some o' these boys turn out well," he said, "but most of 'em, after shiftin' around a spell, find jobs in the county jails. Them New York sassieties are dead lucky to git rid on 'em, and from the way they've been a-pilin' of 'em out here fer the last ten year they ort to be gittin' their streets purty well cleaned up by this time."

"Do you really feel that you want this boy?" my father asked of Mr. North, turning to me as he spoke.

"I sartainly do—ye jes' leave 'im to me, and I'll make a man out'n him in no time. When he gits of age I'll give 'im a hoss, saddle and bridle."

I was therefore placed in his charge, with the

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understanding that I could be taken away at any time if arrangements proved unsatisfactory, and my father left for town a little before sunset.

That night I was shown to an unfinished room up in the attic with only one small window, and no furniture but an old bed, a hickory-bark seated chair, and a large box which served the double purpose of a wardrobe, and table for the tallow candle. Taking up the candle I made a thorough examination of the room and its contents.

In a back corner was a pile of old rubbish, consisting of worn-out rag carpets, harness straps, tobacco stalks and stems, mouldy cast-off bed clothes and other worthless material. When I pulled at one of the straps that stuck out from the heap, a huge rat ran out and disappeared into a crevice in the floor.

In another corner was an old horse collar, a flail and a lot of broken glass fruit jars.

It looked as if they had made a mistake and assigned me to the junk-room instead of a bed chamber. The rafters overhead were laden with cobwebs and nests of wasps. The atmosphere in the room was musty and suffocating. I went to the little window and peered out into the darkness of the still night, and the air was pleasantly refreshing.

After meditating a few minutes I blew out the candle, and as I knelt beside the squeaky bed to say my prayers, the loose, rough boards creaked

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under my knees. In this attitude I buried my face and cried myself to sleep. Upon waking a little later I was frightened, and for a moment didn't know where I was. In a drowsy, spiritless sort of way I crawled into the bed and knew no more until I was called at daybreak.

Mr. North took me out before sunrise and introduced me around to the wood-pile, the cow-shed, the hog-pen, the horse-barn, the hen-house, and the well, in about the order named, and minutely explained my duties in connection with each place. He volunteered to add that there were a number of other duties, such as chopping wood, fixing fences, splitting rails and other "light work" with which he would acquaint me later, after I got "the hang o' things."

One of my first tasks was to milk three cows before breakfast, and after supper at night, but upon this particular morning we had consumed so much time in making the preliminary rounds that this was deferred until after the morning meal. Upon returning to the house, I said: "You have a large fine place here; how many men do you keep?" Looking at me with some surprise he said: "Men? I don't keep no men. I'm not farmin' much, and thar's nuthin' fer men to do. A boy can do all the wuk, and play half the time."

After breakfast I put on a pair of Mr. North's old overalls, which came clear up to my armpits, and taking the milk-rail we started for the cow-

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shed. Upon reaching that malodorous quarter he said: "Ye won't hev no use fer them shoes"—so pulling them off I tied them together by the laces and hung them upon a peg used for hanging up milk-pails, outside the shed. The suggestion was a good one, for I was clear over my ankles in slush the moment I stepped inside.

The three cows were tied close together in a row, and pointing to the middle one he informed me that she was a "pesky critter," and would sometimes kick.

"Ye better milk her fust," he said, "then if yer bucket gits kicked over ye'll only lose one cow's milk."

He handed me a one-legged milk stool, and I waded in between the cows and began on the center one. She fidgetted and twisted about uneasily, while he stood with his hand on her haunch, saying: "So-o-o, boss—so-o-o"; but she didn't "so" worth a cent, and craning her neck to get a good look at me, she hoisted her right hind foot and stuck it square into the milk-pail, then brought it down with a thump, jamming the pail down into the slush almost out of sight.

The cow behind me then began to get restless, and letting her left hind foot go she kicked the stool out from under me and I went down with a splash.

By this time the other cow had disengaged her foot from the milk-pail and began fanning it vigor-

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ously back and forth over my prostrate form. It kept coming lower at each swish until she caught me in the side; then having got her bearings she beat a rapid tattoo on my legs and side and back, while I floundered around vainly endeavoring to get up. The cow behind me joined in the fray and pelted such parts of my anatomy as the other one couldn't reach.

Between the two they literally kicked me clear out behind them, and crawling away out of reach on my hands and knees, I got up onto my feet. Mr. North was leaning up against a post roaring and howling with sympathetic laughter that could be heard half a mile. When I got up he caught his breath long enough to say: "Wa'al, ye're about the purtiest lookin' sight I ever see'd." But to me the spectacle didn't present any aspect that was either funny or "purty."

He said: "Ye're a little strange here, and mebber thet cow'll like ye better on closer acquaintance—she's the best milker on the place."

"But I hope not the easiest," I thought to myself.

He brought in a rope, and tying it tightly around her about midships, said: "Thar, now, try 'er agin."

"How about the other one?" I said. "Oh, jes' push her over a bit—she wun't pester ye." After getting another bucket I accomplished the milking job inside of an hour, and trudged to the house with the milk.

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The hogs were squealing lustily, and Mr. North said: "I reckon them hogs thinks it's about breakfast time"; so we went out and husked a basket of corn for them. From there we went to the stable, and after feeding and currying three horses, I shelled a bucket of corn for the hens. By that time they were calling for water at the house, and I filled two buckets from the well.

After turning the cows out to pasture and doing a few other odd jobs, again I heard the call from the house—"Wa-ter-r-r." I filled the buckets again, and went to the shed with Mr. North to grind the scythe. This job finished, he showed me around the yard, the orchard, the fence-corners, and other places where the weeds were thick and tall, telling me these must be cut right away, as they were going to seed.

He talked constantly in a sprightly way about how easy a place it was to work,—there being nothing to do, excepting to "keep things up." As he was explaining about a new fence that I was to build around the barn-yard, we were again interrupted by that mournful cry, "Wa-ter-r-r!" I thought it must be wash-day.

After dinner he took me over the place and showed me where he wanted the brush and weeds cut in the pasture; then we went to the woods and he marked a dozen white oak trees that he wanted cut down and split into rails with which to make the new "worm-fence" around the barn-yard, talk-

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ing the while about how he loved to make rails when he was a boy.

"Thar!" he said as he swung the axe into the twelfth tree, "that'll do ye till I git time to mark some mo'." He talked a great deal about what an industrious, hard-working boy Johnny was, and said that he used to work around the place until long after dark,—much later than there was any occasion for, because he liked it so well.

"At sundown," he said, "ye can quit work; then, after supper, run out and do up the chores quick, and hev the hull evenin' to yerself." After supper, when I had finished the chores, I felt quite exhausted, and dragged my feet wearily up the rickety attic stairs to my bed; but the air in the room was so stifling that I came down, and going out on the back porch I sat on an old bench. I heard a roar of laughter in the front room, and recognized it as coming from Mr. North.

"Ann, it was the funniest sight ye ever see'd; and I wouldn't a' missed it fer three yoke o' steers!"

"Yes, ye think it's mighty funny, but he's gone and messed up them clean britches, 'n I 'spose he thinks I'm a-goin' to wash 'em fer him; but he'll git fooled. They'll be a mighty sight wus'n they be now afore I'll tech 'em."

There followed a prolonged stillness, broken by Mrs. North's voice—

"What's he ben a-doin' all day? I hain't seen 'im

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do nawthin' but foller ye aroun' like a little poodle. Can he wuk any?"

"Can he wuk! Wa'al I reckon ye'd a' thought he could wuk some if ye'd a-seen him wukin' 'is way out o' the waller from atween them cows. He done more wuk thar in a minit then Johnny'd do in a month."

"Bill North, ye mark what I tell ye! thet boy's got a bad eye, an' he won't be here more'n a month afore he'll be up to some deviltry. He's got a saller, sickly color—'n did ye see thet little scar on his lip? Like's not thet's whar he's ben in some fight 'n stuck a knife in somebody. He don't look strong, and it's more'n even chances he'll git sick on our hands and we'll hev doctor bills to pay."

Having reached the limit of my endurance, I got up and walked out toward the barn, leaving her still talking. I sat down in the barn door, and leaning my head against the casing soon fell asleep. I had a horrible dream of falling over a precipice, and awoke with a start, finding myself lying on the ground.

Upon reaching the house I found the doors locked, so returned to the barn and slept the remainder of the night in the hayloft. At the break of day I got up and went about my chores, after which I had breakfast and went to cutting weeds with the scythe.

At dinner I noticed Mrs. North eyed me curiously, and while resting for a few minutes on the

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back porch after the meal, I heard her say to Mr. North: "Didn't I tell ye what thet boy wuz? I know'd it the minit I sot eyes on 'im—he's a *tramp*; thet's what he is, and he'd ruther sleep in a barn loft like he's use ter doin' ruther'n in a nice clean bed in a respectable house."

I couldn't help feeling that the house was more respectable than at least one of the persons who occupied it. Presently Mr. North came out and said: "Come, now, Bob, git yer scythe and see how many weeds ye can cut agin sundown."

CHAPTER XV

"'TAIN'T BOOK LARNIN' HE WANTS"—THE NEIGHBORS ARE WARNED AGAINST ME

ONE day at noon time a neighbor by the name of Brown came to the house for something, and in speaking to me alone in the back-yard he asked me what wages I received.

"My board and clothes," I said.

"You're a-doin' enough work here for two men," said he, "and if you'll come with me I'll give ye yer board and clothes, and eight dollars a month."

I explained that my father had placed me there, and that I did not dare leave without asking his permission.

At this point the interview was broken off by Mr. North calling out: "Bob, git yer scythe."

It seemed to me there were more weeds on that place than on all the places that ever I saw. After cutting weeds for a day or two Mr. North would say: "Now, today, Bob, ye can rest awhile from yer weed cuttin' and chop some wood, and make a few rails." Then after another day or two he

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would say in a cheerful sort of way: "Now, Bob, ye can rest awhile from yer rail splittin' and cut a few weeds."

He had a happy way of making my work lighter by alternating and diversifying my tasks. It was easy work cutting wood and making rails, because every other day or so I could rest myself by cutting weeds and brush in the hot sun, while the drudgery of weed-cutting was made easy by indulging myself with the restful diversion of rail-splitting between times.

He would talk in a hope-inspiring way about a certain piece of timberland that he had longed to see cleared of trees and rocks, and remarked what a fine field of corn or tobacco that would make when I got it cleared and planted.

He often beguiled the noon resting hour of its dreariness by relating how, when a boy, he was a stranger to such luxury and leisure as I was permitted to enjoy; for with him it was all work and no play. That the first hundred dollars he had earned was put out at interest, and had doubled itself over and over again, and was still earning interest, nights, Sundays and on rainy days. How by degrees he had prospered, until in time he had become a great power for good in the community by lending poor people money with which to buy farms and improve them. Some day, he said, I might be able to buy a little farm and "marry some good lookin' gal."

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My father returned in two weeks to see how I was getting along, and remarked that I looked much healthier and stronger. I told him that while the work was laborious I had no special complaint to make. Leaving me his address where he was soon to begin teaching, he told me to write him if anything went wrong, and then went away.

One evening after supper, when Mr. and Mrs. North had gone into the front room, I sat alone at the table while the woman was washing the dishes and putting them away. I asked her if she would like to have me help her, to which she replied, "Lord bless you; no, child, you've done enough fer one day. I don't see how ye stan' it—the man thet left the day you come said there was enough work fer three men, and they only give him a dollar a day and board. Might I ask what they give you?"

"Just my board and clothes," I said.

"Yer board and *clothes!*" she exclaimed. "And pray, what clothes do ye git but the old duds thet Bill North has wore till they fell to pieces?"

"Do you think I ought to get more?"

"Git *more!* Ye ought to git *some*thin' for slavin' aroun' here from daylight till after dark. I've got a boy fifteen year old thet ain't as big as you, and he gits fifteen dollars a month, jest fer light chorin' and takin' milk to town once a day. He saves ten dollars a month and puts it in the savings bank.

"I've know'd old Bill North these twenty years, and he never give away a dollar in his life 'ceptin'

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what he spent on hisself and wife, and give his children. I'm workin' here now to pay up the interest on a Deed o' Trust he holds on the little farm my poor dead husband bought twenty year ago, and killed hisself tryin' to pay fer."

She dropped down in a chair and holding her apron up to her face, wept for a minute, repeating between sobs: "Poor George! poor George! you'd have been alive and well today if it hadn't been fer old Bill North!"

Then lifting her head and dropping her apron her glistening eyes flashed as she looked straight at me and went on: "Everyone o' them eleven farms he give his children was paid fer with blood money thet he took from the poor people that owned 'em, and couldn't pay the high interest; and he goes prancin' around to all them Baptist Association meetin's, posin' as a great big good-hearted, God-fearin' man. He's an old hypocrit, that's what *he* is, and I'd tell him so to his face, too, but he'd turn me out doors and take my little farm away. He's held thet place in his clutches these twenty year, and now it's all I c'n do to keep the compound interest paid up."

Then clenching her fist and shaking it in the direction of the front room she continued: "Ah-h-h, old Bill North, thar's a day o' reckonin' comin' fer you! when the ghosts of all the poor people ye've drove to the poor-house and the grave will rise up before ye and demand justice."

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Dropping her arm on the table and turning to me she went on: "None of his fine prayers in the Baptist prayer meetin' 'll save 'im from givin' back the farms he stol'd and the widows 'n children he's made homeless. He's in tall clover now, but he's near his end, and when his old carcass is under the ground, his soul 'll live on and make 'im pay dear fer his sins, 'n he'll be sorry he killed my poor George—and he'll be sorry he stol'd all thet money 'n all them farms to fit up in fine style fer his worthless children to lazy around on 'n do nuthin'—he'll be sorry he turned poor widow Notman out of her little home and sent her to the County Farm with a suckin' babe at her breast—" Then turning her face toward the front room, and again shaking her fist, "Ye'll be sorry, Bill, ye'll be sorry!"

After calming herself a little she told me of the eighty-acre farm her husband had bought twenty years ago, and in paying for it had borrowed five hundred dollars from Mr. North at an exorbitant rate of interest; how they had struggled along through poverty after their first child was born, and how by working out, washing, ironing and cooking for the neighbors, and, after a hard day's work, carrying her babe home in her arms, she had managed to pay five dollars a month on the interest; then, after they had paid in all more than four hundred dollars, how her husband had become ill, and the interest—which was compounded semi-annually—continued to pile up year after year until the

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original sum was doubled. How in after years she and her three children had run the farm while her husband worked nearly three years for Mr. North,—the wages of only a dollar a day going to apply upon the back interest,—and finally, owing to lack of proper food and warm clothing, Mr. Jones became ill and disheartened early one winter, and died on Christmas Eve, leaving her with three children—two boys and a girl—to support, with nearly a thousand dollars yet claimed as due on the mortgage.

More than two years ago she had left the older boy and the girl to take care of the place, while she came to work for the Norths, and her entire wages were insufficient to keep up the interest. Every time she had asked Mrs. North for a little money to buy shoes and clothing she was told that if she drew any money the place would be taken away from her; and she had been obliged to patch up and wear Mrs. North's old cast-off garments and shoes.

She said her younger son was saving his earnings in hopes to pay off the mortgage, but she feared she would not live to see this accomplished. It was a heartrending tale of twenty years of distress, but little short of slavery, all on account of five hundred dollars; and it made me feel that my lot had not been so hard after all.

Our conference was at length disturbed by Mr. North's voice as he appeared at the kitchen door:

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"Bob, ye'd better run up ter bed, so ye can git up early in the mornin'."

One evening late in October a neighbor called to see Mr. North about a loan, and as we all sat in a semi-circle before the fireplace I became drowsy, and was almost asleep, when I heard the man say: "Thet's right smart of a boy ye've got thar."

"Yes," replied Mr. North, "and he's the beat-enest boy I ever sot eyes on to go off all by hisself alone in the woods. Every Sunday mornin' of his life he starts off after chorin' time with a cold biscuit in his pocket and a bone fer the dog, and jest wanders aroun' in the woods alone, and never gits hum till chorin' time at night. He wuks purty good, but don't never say much to nobody unless he's spoke to."

"Yes, 'n ye'll find out, Bill North, thet he's got a hist'ry," interrupted Mrs. North. "He goes off a-sneakin' aroun' through the woods jest like he's afraid to stay in the house. I've seen them kind afore, 'n they allus come to some bad end. He puts on a lot o' airs actin' good manners aroun' the house, jest to make folks think he's got good breedin'. He c'n pull the wool over Bill's eyes, but he can't fool me with his pretendin' ways. I'll boun' the fust decent meal's vittles he ever et was when he cum here." Then stopping as if to catch a new breath she went on:

"An' what d' ye think! Bill wants ter send him ter school!—says there's sumthin' in 'im 'n he ort

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to hev a chanct. I know what's in 'im—there's deviltry in 'im, 'n the more he's school'd the more it'll show out. 'Tain't book larnin' he wants—it's wuk. He'll never git a day's schoolin' with my consent; and I've done warned all the neighbors agin 'im."

Through this tirade I sat with my eyes closed, but having been stung by the last remark so that I was no longer able to contain myself, I got up and went up to my bed, while the three sat staring at me with their mouths gaping wide open.

As I sat musing in my chilly attic room her last denunciation ran constantly in my mind—"I've done warned all the neighbors agin 'im!" I had stood her repeated insults without a word of retort, hoping by my actions to convince her that she had misjudged me in classing me with criminals and outcasts, but her venomous feeling showed no abatement and the more I tried to please her the more virulent she became. I lighted my candle and tearing off a small piece of the brown paper that I brought wrapped around my clothes, I wrote a note in lead pencil to my father asking him to come at once and take me away. I could endure her contempt, but to have the neighbors' children look at me with pity and scorn was beyond my endurance.

Next morning I asked Mr. North for an envelope, and with some surprise he asked me—"What fer?"

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"I've written a note that I want to send to my father."

"What air ye writin' *him* fer?"

"Because, I'm not wanted here, and I want him to take me away."

"Now, see here, Bob, ye know the old woman well enough to know she don't mean nuthin' she sez. She thinks a hull lot of ye; but when ye fust cum she was dead set agin ye, 'n she's too cussed stubborn to admit she was wrong."

"But why does she talk that way about me to the neighbors? I never harmed her."

"No, ye never harmed a hair o' her head—she ain't got much to harm—'n I don't believe ye ever harmed a livin' critter or human bein'. Thet's all talk; I'll boun' she ain't sed a word to any neighbor about ye. I watched ye purty careful sense ye've ben here, 'n ye grow more promisin' every day. They don't many of 'em fool Bill North very long, 'n if yer not what I think ye air, I'm the wust fooled man in this neighborhood. I can't think of lettin' ye go, so jes' decide to drap thet letter-writin', 'n take yer scythe 'n run out 'n cut them jimpson weeds back o' the barn, like a good boy. Jest stick to me, Bob, 'n less'n five year I'll make a man out'n ye thet'll supprize yer old dad."

That night after supper while sitting by the kitchen stove talking to Mrs. Jones, we heard loud talking in the front room. Mrs. Jones went to the door, and opening it a trifle, she stood listening in-

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tently. In a moment she motioned to me, and I tiptoed over and stood by her side. "Listen!" she said, "somethin's stirred Bill North's ire, 'n he's givin' his wife fits."

There was a bedroom between us and where they were wrangling, but we could hear them plainly. I heard Mr. North say: "Ye'd ought to be ashamed of yerself fer talkin' so about thet boy. Ye never had a child in yer life thet know'd half what he does"—

"No, 'n I never want to nuther," she said.

"And if ye keep a-spoutin' at him ye'll drive 'im away, thet's what ye'll do. I c'n git more wuk out'n him than any man I ever hed here, but ye cum purty all-fired near knockin' the hull thing in the head last night. He got his dander up 'n was a-goin' to quit, 'n I hed the hardest sort of a time quietin' him down."

"Yes," she replied, "'n thet proves I wuz right—he's so dreadful high strung he can't stand a little proddin' 'thout feelin' hurt. Ye think he's so much, but ye mark what I'm a-tellin' ye, he'll fool ye yit. Thet wantin' to quit wuz all make believe—ye couldn't *drive* 'im off this place."

"Wa'al, jest the same, I'm boun' he'll go to thet school; 'n ye know when I'm a-mind to do a thing it giner'ly gits done."

"Yes, that's so," whispered Mrs. Jones, "he's the wust and the best man I ever seed."

Leaving them still arguing, we both returned to our seats by the stove. I thought to myself, "What

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an unhappy disposition that woman has!" She appeared to have soured against everybody and everything in life, except her brandy toddy. I used to enjoy seeing her take this, because it always seemed to pacify her for a time. Crossing her hands in her lap, or folding her arms on her bosom, she would lapse into a quiet dreamy mood for half an hour or so. When disturbed from this reverie she would usually screw up her face and start off on a strain of invective against someone; then Mr. North would say: "Ann, yer toddy's wore off"; to which she would tartly reply; "It hain't nuther—I didn't hev only a spoonful."

During my entire stay at the place I never but once saw Mr. North over-indulge his appetite for brandy. He used to take it with as much regularity as he ate his meals, but generally observed the strictest moderation—not, however, an invariable rule with his wife. Upon returning from town late one excessively cold Saturday afternoon in February, he went out to the brandy house and brought in a two-quart bottle of apple brandy which he placed on a small table drawn up close to the fire-place; then called for the large tumbler that he always used in mixing his toddy.

The wind was blowing a howling gale from the north, and during the day we had bolted the north front door and stuffed all the cracks around it with rags and cotton. Mr. North rammed his hands deep down into his pockets, and after standing

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with his back to the fire a few seconds in silent contemplation, he took up the bottle, filled the glass to the brim, and swallowed the contents at two or three gulps. His wife looked up in astonishment and exclaimed, "Bill! what on airth air ye doin'?"

"Needn't mind—I know what I'm a-doin'," he retorted, with a surly air,—quite uncommon with him. After warming himself awhile, turning first one side, then the other to the fire, he stepped up to the table, and pouring out another glassful, swallowed its contents as he had the first. His wife got up, and taking up the bottle and glass started off to the other room, with the remark: "Bill North, ye've done lost yer mind; but ye ain't gwine to get no mo' o' this today."

He paid no attention to her, but stood—back to the fire—holding the long flaps of his coat-tails around in front, and stared straight ahead. Then suddenly he started toward the north door, and sliding back the bolt threw it wide open, and the cold north wind blustered a hurricane through the house. He stood there a moment peering out at the elements overhead, then with a shrug of his shoulders, said: "H'm, it's a-gittin' a bit warmer—the wind's got around to the south." At this juncture Mrs. North returned to the room licking her lips with her tongue and remarked: "Bill North, ef ye don't shet thet door 'n set down ye'll have us all froze to death."

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Turning to her he said: "Ann, yer wobblin' thar on yer feet, 'n I'll boun' ye've emptied thet bottle."

"I ain't teched a drap of it," she replied sharply, "'n I c'n walk straiter'n you can this minit."

"If ye didn't, it's the fust time I ever see'd ye tech a bottle thet ye didn't wet yer lips, 'n I'm a-tellin' ye right now, ef ye don't stop your drinkin' ye'll have us all in th' poorhouse. Thar, now, I c'n see ye wobble agin, 'n I tell ye, ye've ben drinkin'! Ann, ye've ben drinkin'!"

If any one thing nettled the old lady more than another it was for Mr. North to accuse her—as he frequently did in a joking way—(and not without good cause) of taking a drink on the sly.

CHAPTER XVI

MY FIRST SWEETHEART

THE first Monday in November I started to school, about three miles distant. I saw two or three children that I had seen before, but having no speaking acquaintance with them, I passed them and trudged along alone, wondering all the while how it would seem to go to school to any teacher other than my father.

It was a typical country school-house, where the boys sat on one side, and the girls on the other. The larger desks, or seats, were in the rear, where the older pupils sat, and the smaller desks in the front, where the smaller scholars were stationed so as to be under the teacher's watchful eye.

Before school was called the children formed in little groups about the room, looking now at me and then at one another, tittering and talking in muffled tones. No one came near me, and I imagined they were all afraid of me, and thought I might bite them or knife them if they approached me. I heard one girl say to another—"That's that orphan that works for old Bill North."

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As they stood around talking, while I sat alone on a bench in the back part of the room, I could see them turn their heads now and then to get another look at me, which convinced me that I was the subject of their conversation. I presume it seemed an outrage that an orphan waif picked up from the streets of New York should be sent there to rub shoulders with them in getting an education.

In lieu of my shoes, which had been worn out, I had on a pair of Mr. North's old boots, worn out at the toes, and about four sizes too large for me. My mortification was much intensified by hearing a very pretty girl say: "My! look what feet!"

After rapping for order the teacher asked the scholars to take their seats and all sat down at the little desks—two in each seat—excepting me. Not knowing where else to sit, I remained on the recitation bench in the rear. The teacher asked me where my seat was.

"I don't know—I've never been here before"; whereupon every boy and girl in the room turned and stared at me with unabating curiosity. The teacher looked up and down the row of seats on the boys' side, and finding one about in the center that was unoccupied, he pointed to it and told me I might take that for the time being. As I shuffled those great heavy cowhide boots along up to the seat the scholars all continued to look at me, and many of them giggled, while a few looked sorry.

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The classes were arranged and I was given four studies,—reading, arithmetic, spelling and geography. With six others,—four girls and two boys,—I was soon called to the recitation bench, and told to bring my Fourth Reader. We all sat down together, and the children on each side moved well away from me,—the girl on one side tucking her dress carefully under her for fear it would brush against the hem of my coat.

The teacher noticing the vacant space on either side of me, said: "Sit up closer together there, you children." They edged over reluctantly, casting side glances at me as they did so.

During the first morning recess I kept my seat, and when the bell tapped for the noon hour, I went up to the long shelf in the front where the lunch baskets and buckets were kept, and taking down my dinner pail, returned to my seat,—recalling Mrs. Jones' remark in the morning: "Bob, I'm fixin' ye a good lunch today, fer when ye git to thet school, ye'll sure need somethin' stimulin'."

Upon removing the lid and looking at the contents I was, if possible, more heart-broken than before. An unpeeled boiled potato, an old hard biscuit, without butter, two pork spare-ribs, with scarcely a mouthful of meat on them, and a half-rotten yellow apple was all the bucket contained. I was ready to burst into tears, but realizing it would not do to give way to my feelings before the whole school, I wiped my eyes, and munched away,

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goaded by a dogged determination to stick it through with a bold exterior and eat that lunch, if it choked me. Although I had no appetite, I ate every crumb, excepting the two bones, the potato skins and the spoiled part of the apple, and jamming the lid down on the bucket I stalked up and put it up on the shelf, then went out of doors where I could think matters over alone.

The day passed uneventfully, and if anyone other than the teacher spoke to me I have no recollection of it.

I well remember that in the afternoon spelling class the word "daguerreotype" was misspelled by every one of the fourteen scholars standing above me in the class, and I went from the foot clear to the head of the class, and got the first "head-mark" of the term.

That night after supper Mrs. Jones asked me to come into the kitchen, and when I had carried in the wood for the fireplaces, I went to see what she wanted.

"What kind of a lunch did ye hev?" I looked straight at her without answering, and suspecting my thoughts she said: "No, bless yer heart, I didn't do it—I couldn't 'a put up such a lunch fer a dog."

Then she told me that she had baked extra biscuits that morning, especially for me, and had filled my dinner pail with fried meat, bread and butter and jam, two doughnuts, and two big red apples; that shortly before I left Mrs. North came to the

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kitchen, emptied the bucket, and going to the cupboard where the cold victuals were kept, made up my lunch from the contents of a dish of old scraps that had been set aside to throw into the swill bucket. Moreover, she told Mrs. Jones that she herself would put up my lunch in future.

Next morning before I started for school Mrs. Jones handed me a package wrapped up in a white cloth, neatly tucked and pinned, and told me to slip it under my coat quickly, which I did. After getting out of sight of the house I opened my dinner bucket, and found a dry crust of light bread, an old hard doughnut, a large spoonful of mashed potato—left over from dinner the day before—and a little knotty, specked apple,—and not a particle of meat! I took the package from under my coat, and dumping the contents of the bucket by the roadside, put the package into it. But on my way home after school I slipped the cloth from the empty bucket into my pocket.

Since I did not harm anyone at school the first day, the scholars perhaps concluded that I possessed some elements of domesticity, and on the second day they did not watch and shun me so noticeably as on the previous day. Indeed, one of the big boys who appeared to be first in command among the pupils condescended to speak to me at noon, and we chatted agreeably for some minutes, while the others looked on mutely, apparently surprised to see that I was harmless.

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The boy, whose name was Tom Oberlin, had been to the Springs the summer before and knew the place where I had lived there, having remembered seeing the house on the high elevation from the road as he passed by on horseback. By night everybody in the school had learned that I was not an outcast shipped out there from New York, and on the way home one of the neighbors' boys caught up with me and we chatted as we walked along together.

Next day Tom, appreciating my evident lonesomeness, invited me to join lunch baskets with himself and his sister, and having again dumped the rubbish from my bucket by the road and replaced it with the package given me by Mrs. Jones, I joined them at noon.

When I opened my dinner pail and laid out two large red apples, three buttered biscuits—one with a large slice of fried ham, one with raspberry jam, and the other with plum preserves—a large piece of frosted cake, and a piece of mince pie, all rolled up neatly in a spotless white cloth, I saw Tom's sister cast a significant glance at him, and we chatted pleasantly as we "pitched" our lunches together on the white cloth spread over one of the desks, and ate from one common table. I gave his sister—whose name was Lucy—one of my red apples and the piece of mince pie, and received in return a sugar pear and a piece of apple pie. Lucy was older than I, but rather small for her age. She

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was not pretty, but was vivacious, and popular among the scholars.

The Oberlins were well-to-do people, and having been invited into their circle I was placed on an equal footing with anyone in the school. From that day until now I have never forgotten the great big, kind-hearted Tom Oberlin as he looked to me at that time when he reached out his hand and his heart and rescued me from the slough of despair. May God reward him for that generous act!

By noon next day nearly everyone had spoken to me, and I was invited to play "Town Ball" with the boys after the noonday lunch. That night I walked home with Lou Burns and her brother, near neighbors of the Norths, and they asked me if I would whistle at the gate for them next morning on my way to school.

I thought Lou a rather pretty girl, and as time went on we became quite chummy; until one day her "regular" sweetheart, who haply had become a little jealous, called me some kind of name not very respectful to my parentage, and we had a serious argument in which he came out second best. The teacher called us in from the playground and while we were laying the facts before him,—each pleading his own cause,—Lou opened the front door just wide enough to stick her head in, and, seeing the teacher's back was turned she made an awful face at me. After that we were not friends.

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I was requested by the teacher to tell what the boy had called me, and inasmuch as the rigor of my action seemed justified by the insult, he told me I could return to play. After looking the other boy over he evidently thought he had been sufficiently corrected, and in a few minutes he, too, came out. One of the larger boys outside was going to take sides against me, but he was settled in short order by Tom Oberlin, and I had no further difficulty about the matter.

On the Saturday following my first day at school, I went to town with Mr. North and spent eight dollars of my ten dollar bill in buying a new pair of boots, a cap, mittens, and other needful things. With the other two dollars I bought some little trinkets for Mrs. Jones. With my silver dollar I bought two story books—the first I had ever owned.

I can close my eyes now and see myself up in the attic, as I leaned over that old box, excitedly poring over their pages by the dim candle light, now almost thirty years ago. I used to read until I got so cold that I could stand it no longer, then undressing, I blew out the candle, said my prayers, and crawled into bed, where I would think over all I had read, and fall asleep wondering if anything would ever turn up in my life to make me as fortunate as the hero of my story. I wrote my sister telling her of my expenditures and she immediately sent me a post-office order for ten dollars.

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The belle of the school was Minnie Oliver, who did not mingle much with the other pupils, excepting Lucy Oberlin. Early in January I was invited to a party at the Oberlins and was there formally introduced to Miss Oliver. She stayed over night with the Oberlins and next day at noon I was invited to "pitch" my lunch with them at school.

I had formed the habit of dumping the contents of my dinner pail beside a big stump at the right of the road, and had accumulated quite a respectable garbage heap,—until some neighboring dog discovered it. After that every time I emptied my bucket I found that the lunch of the day before had been removed,—excepting the frozen apples.

After my introduction to Minnie she was inclined to allow me the privilege of chatting with her at the noon recess, and we got on very nicely together. She declared that she had no regular beau, so I felt safe in talking with her without incurring the displeasure of any of the other boys. One day I decided to give her one of my big red apples, but couldn't see how I was to do it without someone observing me. The noon hour passed with no suitable opportunity, so I put the apple in my desk. During the afternoon while fumbling about for my geography to go to recitation the apple fell out and rolled across the floor. The teacher picked it up, saying: "I'll take care of this"—which he did; so Minnie didn't get any apple that day.

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Undaunted by this failure, I determined to try it again the next day; but again there was no chance, for Minnie stayed indoors, and someone was always with her. When school was dismissed she was about the last one to get her wraps on, and pretending to be busy with some difficult problem I did not leave my seat until she was nearly ready to go. Then jumping up I ran and got my dinner pail and cap, and as I followed her out the door I slipped the apple into her hand and ran down the road without looking back.

Next day at noon I saw her on the opposite side of the room eating the apple, and seeing me she held it up and gave an expressive little wink, which tickled me nearly out of my new boots. We then became fast friends, and remained so throughout the winter.

I particularly remember a little boy by the name of Jimmy Christy. He had a wild and luxuriant growth of shaggy yellow hair, and never wore a hat or cap, even in the coldest weather. His principal occupation in the school-room was to chew wads of paper and snap them at scholars about the room. I never saw him studying his lesson, excepting on the way from his seat to the recitation bench. When called upon to stand and recite he would always rub the shin of one leg against the calf of the other and bury the fingers of one hand in his tangled hair. In spelling class, no matter what word was pronounced for him to spell, he

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was sure to begin with S, and he would seldom get any further than that initial letter, which he would stutteringly repeat,—“S—S—S.” Jimmy was a belligerent boy, and rarely left the school after it was dismissed at four o’clock without shying a snow-ball or spoilt apple with unerring aim at someone who had incurred his displeasure during the day.

Once while spending the evening at the home of the Olivers I had a chat with Mr. Oliver about the Springs. He had recently bought a couple of lots there, and predicted a great future for the place. When I told him of my eight-acre possession he remembered the house and location, and was quite astonished that I should be “working for old Bill North.” He said that some day my property would make me immensely rich; but at that moment I was more interested in Minnie than I was in the real estate business, and while outwardly professing to share his enthusiasm, I was secretly wishing he would hush up and go off to bed,—or most anywhere else.

I received “bids” to a number of parties during the winter, and in the games of “Post Office,” “Digging the Well,” and “Picking Cherries,” I was frequently paired with Minnie; and in playing “Old Dan Tucker,” when it came to the part where we all sang, “First to the right, then to the left, And then to the one that you love best,” it used to afford me great pleasure to swing Minnie around

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in the center of the ring, and at the same time give Lou Burns the "icy stare" in remembrance of the dreadful face she made at me at school.

Even with its accompanying hardships, that winter when I attended the old weather-beaten country district school, where I began so ignobly and came out in the spring so triumphantly, is one of the enchanting epochs of my life, over which I love to ruminate and dream alone. One of my keenest pleasures is to think how, with the motherly kindness and assistance of Mrs. Jones, I cheated old Mrs. North of her purpose to humiliate me with those despicable lunches, without robbing her of one particle of her secret gratification. Many was the time I looked at her and chuckled inwardly to think how badly her projects had miscarried, and what a joyous winter's feasting she had unwittingly provided for some neighborhood dog. Later in the winter she had become a little more relenting, and sometimes when I turned the bucket bottomside up by the stump, I should have felt a consciousness of wasteful extravagance but for the fact that the ration went to a good cause.

My Sundays were spent alone wandering about with the dog in the woods, or with Tom Oberlin. Next to the companionship of Tom I enjoyed my solitary rambles over the hills and fields, and oftentimes I ploughed my way through the snow all day long, with my boots frozen stiff, while my feet inside were warm and comfortable. They were

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days that made a pleasant and lasting impression upon my memory. Occasionally Tom would join me on these tramps, and we rarely returned without bringing in one or more rabbits.

CHAPTER XVII

MY FIRST INVESTMENT—I DECLARE MY INDEPENDENCE AND FACE THE WORLD ALONE

ABOUT the middle of April I left school and took up the "spring's work."

Late in the fall and early winter it was Mr. North's custom to make from twenty to thirty barrels of apple brandy from the waste apples on his place and from various other farms about the surrounding country. Out back of his house was a small log hut that he called the Brandy House, where he kept the distilled spirits. There were a great many rats in the place, and one drizzly day late in April we took out all the barrels and boxes and he set me to work digging up the dirt floor and killing the rats. The floor was undermined with rat holes, and they had worked roads and runways all around under the log sills.

The dog and I were making good headway in clearing the place of the pesky rodents, and while digging under one of the sills my spade struck something that rattled like metal. Upon spading

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it out, I found it to be an old rust-eaten can filled with silver dollars. Finding this was not all I continued to excavate until I had unearthed four more similar cans, all filled with silver coins. At the tops the coins were much discolored, but underneath they were comparatively clean, with an occasional streak of rust off the can where the dampness had settled through. I couldn't imagine what I had got into, or how they came to be there.

It then occurred to me that they had set a trap to test my honesty, and here, I thought, is my chance to prove to the old lady that I am all Mr. North has claimed for me. So getting a feed basket I dumped the contents of all five cans into it and hauled it to the house, a short distance away. I dragged my spoils into the front room where Mr. and Mrs. North sat talking, and turned the basket upside down between them in front of the fireplace, saying: "I found this out in the Brandy House."

I looked hard at the old lady as they gazed wonderingly at each other, then at me. Neither spoke for a few seconds, but at length Mr. North remarked: "Wa'al I'll boun', whar did ye git thot?" After explaining where and how I dug the money up he scratched his head and finally remembered burying it at a time during the Civil War when it was reported that the "Federals" were approaching in force; and during the attendant excitement he had forgotten all about it. The old lady kept

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silence for a little while, then skewing up her nose and twitching her lips in her characteristic way, she managed to blurt out: "A fine mess ye've made on the floor!"

Did he give me a quarter of it, or ten per cent of it? No! *not so much as a cent, or even a "thank you!"*

Mr. North had many acres of beautiful blue grass pastures, and in years past he used to gather a great deal of the seed, which found ready market at a dollar a bushel. Early in July he told me that if I would gather a lot of the seed he would give me half of the sum realized for it; so I worked assiduously in harvesting and garnering it into the old granary. After finishing the chores I used to go out and work until it was so dark I couldn't see; and on moonlight nights I sometimes worked as late as ten o'clock, dreaming all the while of what I should buy with so much money. It seemed to me that here was a chance to make a small fortune, and I devised all sorts of ways in which it could be advantageously invested or spent. For a while I thought of nothing but blue grass seed in my wakeful hours, and dreamt of it in bed at night. Several times while preoccupied with my task I did not even stop for dinner at midday, but toiled steadily on until sunset, unmindful of hunger or thirst. At length the seed began to dry up and fall away, and I was sorry when the time came that I had to leave off gathering it.

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Upon weighing my crop it was found that I had accumulated forty-eight bushels—twenty-four dollars for my share! In due time a buyer came around, and weighing it out, he paid Mr. North forty-eight dollars, all in silver. I expected he would immediately hand me over my share, but he didn't. I said nothing, hoping he would give it to me next day. The following day he went to town and upon returning handed me a package containing a new pair of boots, a cheap suit of clothes and a hat! As I tore open the bundle, he remarked, "Ye done mighty well with yer blue grass money; next year ye can gather some mo'."

Later in the summer as the disappointment over the grass seed venture gradually wore off, I consoled myself with the anticipated results from an investment I had made in another branch of the farming industry. Along in the winter when I got the ten dollar money order from my sister I became so worked up over Mr. North's stories of his success in making "money make money" that I was eager to invest my funds. He had an eight-weeks-old calf for sale and suggested that I risk my capital in that.

"But suppose it dies?" I inquired.

"Wa'al, then ye're out o' pocket; but I reckon there ain't much danger after it gits thet age." So giving him the ten dollars I took formal possession of the "bossy." It had just been weaned, and had learned to eat bran and hay. I fixed up a

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stall in the barn, in which the calf was provided with a deep bed of corn husks, and every morning when I curried the horses that calf was curried and rubbed down with scrupulous care. After feeding it I used to stand and watch it admiringly, and imagined I could see it swell and grow as it licked up the bran.

My first thought upon waking in the morning was the calf, and hurriedly slipping into my clothes I would run to the barn to see if it was all right, and how much it had grown during the night. I always held the water bucket while it drank, and oftentimes when I feared she would get tired from standing too long I climbed into the pen and catching her by the legs threw her down in the bed of husks so she could rest and grow fat. I mixed corn and bran together and ground it between the old circular stone feed-grinders, and mixing this with scraps of old bread and other refuse from the kitchen I made "hot mashes" on the kitchen stove every morning before the family got up. During the winter months my thoughts were about equally divided between that calf and Minnie Oliver. I figured that with the proceeds from the calf I could buy at least three more, and after fattening them I could buy a respectable herd.

When the grass came up in the spring I used to get up at daylight and taking a basket would get down on my hands and knees and pull tender grass and weeds enough for the day's feed; and all

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through the spring and summer I never missed a day in pulling or cutting green feed, and weeds, and stuffing that calf with all it could hold. Mr. North used frequently to admire it and marvel at its wonderfully rapid growth. Several times he asked how much I would take for it.

One day late in the fall, when "Bossy" was a year old one of the neighbors came and looked her over, and asked what I would take for her. I said I hated to sell her; but upon running to the house and conferring with Mr. North, he said if we could get a fair price it would be better to sell her then, and thus avoid keeping her through the winter. I realized, too, that it would soon be time when she would require grain and hay, in the absence of grass, and figured that I ought not to ask Mr. North to feed her through the winter for nothing. So we struck a bargain, and the man agreed to give \$28 for her. I was heart-broken when she was led away. I noticed he did not offer to pay any money at the time, but Mr. North assured me that it was all right. After a few days I asked Mr. North if the man had paid for "Bossy" and was informed that he had.

"How much board d' ye think I ort to charge ye fer yer calf?" he said. I looked at him, and my face must have presented an amusing picture, for he laughed outright. Then I supposed, of course, he was only joking with me.

"Wa'al, the reg'lar price fer boardin' cattle on

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blue grass pastures is fifty cents a week, but being as this'n started in young, and ye took care of her yerself, I'll make it forty cents a week. They wuz forty weeks, makin' \$16; and thet from \$28 leaves \$12." So he handed me twelve dollars, with the remark: "Ye done mighty well on thet ten dollar investment; ye made twenty per cent. in less'n a year. That's more'n my money earns—I'm satisfied ter make ten er twelve per cent."

Early in September, when I had been working for Mr. North a little more than a year, I was talking with him one evening about the Springs and told him of the property there, and how it came to be in my name. He had heard the place well spoken of, and said he would like to see my land. So we arranged to take a horseback trip to the Springs, and a few days later we started off one bright morning.

Upon turning my face toward my old home, with its memories of mingled sadness and pleasure, hope and despair, I felt a keen thrill of expectation, and wondered if we should find the Hollistons and the Hewletts at the hotel. I had often thought of them while at my isolated country retreat and had spent many wakeful hours in bed meditating on why Mrs. Holliston had taken an interest in me, and what she had meant by asking me if I should like to live in the South.

The nearer we approached, the faster my heart thumped, and when we reached our destination in

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the afternoon, I was so transported that we passed right through our place and by the house without my saying a word about it, so eager was I to reach the hotel, a short distance beyond. We rode up in front of the hotel, and jumping down I handed my bridle reins to Mr. North and rushed into the office, so excited that I scarcely knew what I was about. There were only a few people about the place, and hurrying in I inquired of a messenger if Mrs. Holliston was there.

"No, they didn't come back this year."

"Are Mr. and Mrs. Hewlett here?" They had been there, but left early in the month. I walked slowly out, with a heavy heart. Mr. North asked me, rather impatiently: "What air ye doin' here—whar's yer land?"

"Oh, it's back here a little way"; and mounting my horse we rode back; but I was so downcast that I scarcely knew which way to go. Mr. North, noticing my disconcerted actions, asked:

"Bob, what makes ye act so strange like?"

When we came to the path leading from the road up to the house, I turned out, saying: "This is the place."

He looked at me in a questioning way, and said: "Why, we jest passed this place."

After looking carefully over the premises, he asked: "Bob, what'll ye take fer it?"

"I can't sell it without seeing my father and Mr. Welfleet."

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"What d' ye want to see yer father fer—ye said Welfleet is yer legal gardeen? How would ye like to swap this place fer an int'rest in a little farm? Then when ye git of age ye c'n settle down on th' farm and pay off the balance."

Having in mind what Mrs. Jones told me, I was not enthusiastic over the suggestion; but he was persistent, and made a number of proposals, all of which were equally unattractive. I saw that a number of new houses had been built in the vicinity, and three were at that moment in process of construction within view of our house. The roads had been greatly improved, and though the busy season was now over, there were still traces of bustle and business activity.

We returned to the hotel and spent the night, Mr. North cheerfully paying the bill. In the morning he went out alone and looked about the town (and I suspect looked over my place again), and about ten o'clock we started home.

Next morning Mrs. Jones came hurrying excitedly out to the kitchen where I was making a fire in the stove, and told me she had overheard a conversation the night before between Mr. and Mrs. North; that Mr. North had told his wife I had the best piece of property at the Springs; and that he was "gwine to hev it," even if he had to give up his homestead place in exchange. She advised me to go at once to someone and find out what it was worth; and to "look out sharp fer

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old Bill North. He'll skin ye out of every dollar of it if he can."

I had not forgotten the grass seed episode nor my calf experience, and had already made up my mind to make no rash bargains. After several long interviews with Mrs. Jones, I decided to return to the Springs the next summer, and told Mr. North of my intentions. He tried to dissuade me, saying the place might "run down," but I was fixed in my purpose, and told him I should leave and drift for myself next spring.

I had not seen my father for more than a year, and I no longer considered myself under his control. A circumstance that provoked me greatly was that Mr. North always opened and read my letters from my sister and father. On one occasion he carried one of my sister's letters several days before showing it to me. He even insisted upon reading every letter I wrote.

That winter I went to school again, though somewhat irregularly, being kept home at work much of the time. How I survived those two winters in my unheated sky-den, without dying from the result of exposure, is one of the unsolved mysteries of my boyhood. My bed clothing was designedly made scant, and on cold nights I placed my coat and trousers over the thin covering. I always curled myself up in the middle of the bed with the covers pulled over my head, and never peeped out until getting-up time. In this way the

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warmth of my breath made up in some degree for the insufficiency of covering.

The roof was of split clapboard shingles, and during the snowstorms the snow sifted through and covered everything in the place. Many's the time I poked my head out from under the covers in the morning and found the bed adorned with an inch or more of snow. Shaking my snow-covered clothes and getting into them I would go down and start fires in two fireplaces and the kitchen stove, and milk the three cows, before anyone else in the household got up. Even on the coldest mornings, after bringing water from the well, I washed and dried my hands and face at the old washstand out on the back porch,—oftentimes when the mercury was well below zero.

The second winter I took care of three horses, three cows, fifty-one hogs, and the poultry, and carried water for the house, in addition to cutting and hauling thirty-seven cords of hard wood and twenty-one hundred ten-foot fence rails.

Throughout the entire twenty months that I remained with Mr. North the total amount of cash received from him, outside of the two dollars' profit on the calf, was fifty-five cents, in three payments of ten cents each, and once in a spasm of exceptional generosity he gave me twenty-five cents. Most of my clothing was bought with money received from my sister, and it is doubtful if Mr. North's entire cash expenditures for my clothes

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during the whole time exceeded the twenty-four dollars due me for the blue grass seed.

All through the winter I was planning and building air-castles for the future, most of which were destroyed and rebuilt many times, and none of which came out as I had projected, excepting that on the first day of May I left the place with twelve dollars in my pocket and a fairly decent looking suit of clothes on my back; but with a grim determination to face the world, and go it alone. Mr. North's last words were: "Bob, if ye find the world is agin ye, come back, 'n ye can hev yer old place back." I thanked him and said I should remember his kindness.

As I walked down the driveway I turned to take a farewell look at the place, then passed into the main highway with a feeling of freedom, hope, and determination such as I had never experienced before. I thought to myself, "I'm almost fourteen years old, strong enough to do a man's work, and I'll *never* return to that bondage."

CHAPTER XVIII

MY MOTHER'S HERITAGE

WE often read of the success (but seldom of the failures) of vigorous boys who, filled with proud ambition, leave comfortable homes and sally forth to face the world and blaze their own trails. They are wont to scorn the proffered assistance or advice of relatives and friends, preferring to earn their spurs lone-handed, thus acknowledging their indebtedness for success to no one but themselves.

I had no such mighty ambitions. I had no home in the real sense of the word—no one to go to for advice—had never known anything but hardship and privation under a hard task-master from earliest childhood. My condition was forced upon me by the uncompromising hand of Fate, and there was no alternative. I had never been taught self-reliance, and was permitted to develop no ideas or individuality of my own. I had simply served as a sort of human anvil for a brutal parent to pound out his spleen on. Not even being per-

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mitted to cry after a beating, I had always been obliged to stifle my feelings within me until I could get off somewhere alone. I have often wondered what invisible power operated to inspire me with sufficient determination to break away and shift for myself. But any change—no matter what—must be for the better—it could scarcely be for the worse; and when timidity began to give place to courage I wondered why I hadn't run away years ago.

Upon my arrival at the Springs I went to see Mr. Welfleet, but he was out of town. Then I went to the office of the doctor who had attended me, and asked him if he knew of any work I could get to do.

"What kind of work do you want?"

"Anything will do to start with; but I would like to get a job in some store, if I can."

"All right, you sit here and take care of my office a few minutes and I'll go down to Herkimer's grocery store and see if he can use a boy."

While he was gone I sat alone in his little reception room, wondering what message he would bring back. I thought of a number of stories I had read during the winter about the adventures of poor boys, and of men who had risen from obscurity to fortune and fame; how one poor boy had started as a grocery clerk, and afterward bought out his employer and became very rich. I fancied myself buying out "Herkimer's Cash Grocery"

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and enlarging the business tremendously. The world seemed full of promise at the moment, notwithstanding Mr. North's oft-repeated saying:

"They ain't the chances fer a boy today thet they was forty year ago."

The doctor soon returned and said they would want another clerk about the first of June, when the cottagers began to come in.

"But I must have work right off."

"All right, I'll accommodate you. Can you do collecting?"

"I never did, but I can try,—what is it?"

"Well, you know the town and country around here—I'll make out some bills, and you can go around and get the money. I'll give you ten per cent. of all you collect."

"Suppose I can't collect anything?"

"Then I'll stand a week's board for you."

He explained what I was to do and say, and we made an agreement by which he guaranteed a week's board. He took me to a good boarding house, and from there I went to a clothing store and invested \$11.50 of my twelve dollar capital in new clothes. Next morning I reported for duty with fifty cents in the right hand pocket of my new trousers. He gave me a handful of statements and off I started.

The first man was out; the next was a woman, and she sent down word that she was sick abed and couldn't see me. The next man—a butcher—

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had no money, and the next patient—who kept a carpenter shop—threw me out of his place, saying he would pay the bill when he got “damn good and ready”; but from the way he acted I thought he wasn’t quite ready, nor did it look as if he was in any hurry to get ready. By this time it was noon, and I trudged wearily back to the office to report. The doctor was out, so I sat there in a semi-disconsolate mood until he returned, half an hour later.

“Your patients were ’most all out,” I said, “and those who were in wouldn’t pay me.”

“Yes, they’re generally out about the first of the month, unless they are too sick to get out. But keep up your courage—you’ll have better luck next time.”

I hoped so. In the afternoon I had better luck—I made six calls, and one woman gave me fifty cents. She asked me to call again the first of next month, but it was two miles out to her house, so I made no promise. However, she gave me a hot doughnut, and apologized for making me come so far for such a small sum. I got back to the office about sunset and for my first day’s work had five cents to my credit. The doctor seemed cheerful, however, and I thought if he could stand it, I could. He said something about a “bad beginning making a good ending,” and at that rate it seemed the ending ought to be conspicuously brilliant.

Next morning he gave me some more statements, saying: “I think you’ll have better success

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with these." The first man I saw was a blacksmith. When I entered his shop he stood blowing the fire with the big bellows overhead, which he manipulated by pulling a rope. When I handed him the bill he stopped and scrutinized it carefully. I noticed a frown come over his face, and instinctively I moved toward the door. He flew into a rage, and picking up a large hammer looked at me warningly. By this time I was at a safe distance outside the shop.

"Thet man killed my wife, 'n you tell 'im I'll kill the next man thet comes to collect this bill." If he said anything more I didn't hear it, for by that time I was well out of hearing distance.

It became second nature for me when presenting a bill to keep conveniently near the door. Some were humble and apologetic; others were haughty and wrathful. I thought he had a queer lot of patients, and wondered how he ever collected enough money to pay his expenses. I did not collect any money the second day.

On the third day he gave me a bill against a farmer who he said was "an ugly old brute," and cautioned me to use persuasive measures with him. He lived three miles from town. The bill was for fifteen dollars, and the doctor told me it had been running two years, and that he would give me half of what I collected. It seemed like a long tramp for a short chance, but I took it. On my way I debated what I should say, and before

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reaching the house I sat down to get my breath, since I might need it in making my escape.

I found the farmer out in the shed mending a plow, and upon approaching him I thought the doctor not much amiss in saying he was "an ugly old brute."

I said, "Good morning, Mr. Billings."

He said, "How de'," and went on with his work.

"You have a fine place here, Mr. Billings."

"Wa'al, I ort to hev—I've done wuk enough on it."

"I understand you are one of the leading farmers of this section."

"I ort to be—my family was one of the fust settlers of this State." He continued to tinker and talk without looking up.

"Have you any boys, Mr. Billings?"

"Yes, I've got one about your size, an' a right smart young chap he is too. He wuks fer old Herkimer in town—collectin'."

"Then you know what a hard time a collector has, don't you?"

"Guess I ort to—they've hed enough of 'em out here a-walkin' their shoe leather out fer nuthin'."

"You won't be angry with me, will you, if I tell you I'm making my living the same way your son is." He looked up quickly and scowled at me.

"Are ye a collector?"

"I've just started in tryin' to make my own

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living, and Dr. Beals has given me a job, and guaranteed my first week's board."

"Oh, he did, did he—how much does he give ye?"

"He gives me a part of what I collect."

"And if ye don't collect nuthin' ye don't git nuthin', eh?"

"No, sir."

"Wa'al, did he tell ye ye wouldn't git nuthin' out here?"

"No, sir, he didn't. I only made five cents commission on the first two days' work; then he said he would give me some easy accounts to collect; so I wouldn't lose my courage."

"Easy ones, eh? 'n he said I was easy to collect from, did he?"

"No, sir, but yours was among those he gave me this morning."

"Oh, thet's it, is it? And what did he say he'd give ye fer comin' out here?"

"He said it was a long walk, and he'd give me a little more on what I collected." After some further conversation, he said: "Ye go back to town 'n tell him he ort to be ashamed of hisself fer sendin' ye away out here. Tell 'im thet old Billin's is the hardest pay in this county, 'n thet ye ort ter hev half of all ye git from 'im."

"You don't want me to tell him a lie, do you?"

"No, it won't be no lie." Then straightening up he looked hard at me for a moment.

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"Foller me!" he said, as he turned about; and I accompanied him to the house. He brought out an old dirty stocking, and counting out ten silver dollars, handed them to me with the remark: "Ye're the fust collector thet ever got a cent on this place, 'n ye mind me so much o' my boy thet I'll jest give ye somethin' ter start ye along." I thanked him and dividing the coins between my two trousers pockets, I ran nearly all the way to town.

Next day the doctor gave me a statement of an account against a woman at the hotel, and upon going up to the desk to inquire if she was in, the clerk, whom I recognized, asked me: "Are you Bob Hardwick?"

"Yes, do you remember me?" I said. He then handed me an envelope addressed, "Master Bob Hardwick," remarking that although it was an urgent message, it had been there nearly two years. It contained the following note:

"My dear Bobby: If you receive this note, write to me at once, addressing your letter to Mrs. J. B. Holliston, Richmond, Va. I have some very important news for you.

Sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH CARPENTER HOLLISTON.

"August thirty-first."

I was so excited that I forgot all about the bill I had come to collect, and hurried to my boarding

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place to think matters over in my room. I got out a small package of papers and letters that I kept tied up with a string, and upon comparing this with the note that accompanied the ten-dollar bill, found the writing to be the same. It was now clear to me who had "raised" my salary.

I wrote a note, as directed, and ran all the way to the post office with it. Two days later—when my letter was about reaching its destination—I went back to the post office to inquire if a letter had come for me, and during the next two days I went there at least a dozen times. At noon of the fourth day the postmaster handed me a letter, saying, "Here's that letter you're lookin' for." I opened it, and my heart stood still while I read:

"My dear Bobby:

Get the inclosed money order for twenty-five dollars cashed at the post office, and take the first train and come to Richmond. Call at my home, No. —, ——— Street.

Sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH C. HOLLISTON.

"May Eleventh."

I shook myself and looked around to see if I was awake. The command was brief and imperative. I ran to the doctor's office, not thinking to cash the money order, but he was out; then I rushed to my boarding house and hastily wrapped up my clothing. Back to the office with my bundle, I found

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the doctor still out. I hired a hackman at the hotel to take me to the railroad station a few miles away. "My pay before we start," he said; and putting my hand in my pocket I found I had but ten cents. It then occurred to me that I hadn't cashed the money order; so we went over, and the postmaster handed me out five five-dollar bills, which I showed to the driver, and I left town without even collecting the \$8.75 that the doctor owed me, less my board. At the railroad station I bought a ticket to Richmond, Virginia, and gave the hackman the fare, three silver dollars. I waited four hours for a train, and it seemed like a month. The train rolled in, and for the first time in my life I boarded a passenger coach.

"Does this train go to Richmond?" I asked of the man with cap and brass buttons.

"No, but we'll take you part way."

"I don't want to go part way—I want to go all the way"—and I started to get off.

"Hold on, we'll take you where you can change cars for Richmond." I dropped into a red plush-covered seat, which seemed as soft as a feather bed. I looked excitedly about the car as the train pulled out, and was astonished at its elegance. I didn't know there was such luxury in the world—riding on a soft springy seat in a car whizzing through the air at such speed! In my excitement I had left my bundle on a bench at the station, but no matter—I had on my new suit, and enough

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money left to buy another. "What can her news be?" I thought.

Arriving at Richmond late the next afternoon I hurried out of the station and asked a hackman where ——— Street was.

"It's a long ways off," he said, "but I'll take you for fifty cents."

"Can't I walk there?"

"Yes, but you'll have a long walk, 'n you mightn't get thar agin dark." So handing him a half dollar, I climbed in, and he slammed the door shut and drove off. We went bumpity-bump through the rough streets, and once I thought we had turned over; but the vehicle righted itself again and on we went, past stores, warehouses, dingy-looking ramshackle buildings, across railroad tracks, and finally out into the residence district. I thought the fifty cents well invested. At length he turned into a driveway entering a spacious yard and stopped under the *porte cochere* of a large elegant white house with green blinds. As I jumped out and started up the steps I fell flat on my face; but no one saw me, and scampering up I rang the bell. A colored man with blue coat and brass buttons appeared.

"Is Mrs. Holliston in?"

"Your card, please."

"What card?"

"Your card with your name."

"I have no card—my name is Bob Hardwick."

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"Does the Mistress expect you?"

"Yes, I think she does—tell her I'm Bob Hardwick." He showed me to a seat and started off. As I sat trembling and gazing wildly about the room, everything assumed a deathlike stillness. What grandeur! I thought—just like some of the beautiful old southern homes I had read about in books, but never expected to see in real life.

Presently I heard the rustle of skirts, and then Mrs. Holliston's smiling face appeared at the door. Never shall I forget her benevolent expression as she stopped under the arch of the door and looked at me.

Her first words were, "Why, Bobby! how you have grown!"

Advancing she extended her hand and clasping mine in hers she patted it gently and said: "I've thought of you so many times, and wondered if you would ever get my note. I wrote to the hotel proprietor apprising him of its importance, but he replied that you had not been seen there since it was left."

She sat down on the sofa beside me, and after telling her how I came to get her note, she asked:

"Did you know your grandfather Rector is dead?"

"No, ma'am; I didn't know he was living."

"You didn't know, did you, that you are an F. F. V.?"

"No, ma'am,—what's that mean?"

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"It stands for First Families of Virginia; which may mean much, Bobby; or may mean very little. But in your case it signifies a great deal. Your mother's family name is one of the oldest and most respectable in Virginia. One of your ancestors, Enoch Rector, founded and endowed Rector College at Rector Town in what is now West Virginia. And your mother's father, who was a rich man, died intestate nearly two years ago, leaving his estate to be divided among the heirs of his two children, and you have inherited one-third of your mother's half interest."

I can see myself now as I sat there staring at her with my mouth gaping wide open, and wondering if it could be a reality.

She went on: "When you told me your mother's name and native State at the Springs the name seemed familiar, and I wrote to my lawyer here to look the matter up. He wrote to Grafton and found that one of Willis Rector's two daughters married a man by the name of Hardwick against her father's consent, and soon afterward moved to Iowa. You are also related to the Willis family.

"My lawyer was delayed in getting the information, and his letter did not reach me at the Springs until three or four days after you left so suddenly; so upon departing I left the note for you.

"After returning home I had the administrator advertise for you in all the papers near the Springs, but nothing was heard from you or your

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father. I have recently learned that the estate has been settled and half of the money is now in a New York bank, waiting to be claimed by your mother's heirs."

At this juncture a carriage drove up and Mr. Holliston came in. He greeted me cordially, remarking that I had been the occasion of a great deal of anxiety on the part of his wife.

The evening meal was soon announced and having been shown to my chamber by a servant, I prepared myself for dinner.

I forbear to weary the reader with a detailed account of the dinner and the state of my feelings, for they can better be imagined than described. The truth is, I was so delirious with joy that I scarcely know what I did think or say; nor is it of any special importance that I should.

I do remember, however, that upon retiring to the seclusion of my room that night I knelt on the soft rug at the side of the bed and meditated for a long time. My thoughts ran back again to that awful night in May; to my school teacher; the parting with my sister; that September afternoon when we bade good-by to the old home; the hard experiences and privations of that long journey; that dreadful night following my accident at the Springs; and how by good fortune I had met Mrs. Holliston, whose lucky discovery had made me, I thought, the happiest boy in the world.

I remembered how time and again a ray of sun-

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shine had burst in upon my childish fancies and kindled new hopes; then the light had glimmered away in the shadow of some untoward event, and I had lapsed into a state of inert hopelessness. The memories of the last two years, though dismal enough, were the happiest of my life, for during that period I had enjoyed immunity from the brutal and overpowering influence that had broken my spirit and shattered my hopes again and again. The vista of the past nine years, back to the time of my first recollections, presented a long and gloomy perspective, and it seemed that I had lived and endured enough to make me an old man. No happy childhood memories! No boyhood associations! Always in a state of apprehension, fear and trembling—like a hunted beast. What a retrospection! And now what a resurrection!

My first prayerful thought I remember clearly, as I buried my face in the clean, sweet-scented covers, was—"O God! I thank Thee for my mother's good name. And for having delivered me from such an unhappy existence into a new life filled with great promise." Then—I silently thought—"My prayer, so oft-repeated as I knelt shivering in the cold in my old attic room, is at last answered in full!"

CHAPTER XIX

MY FOSTER MOTHER

I WAS wide awake at the first peep of dawn, and as I lay in bed viewing the elegance of my surroundings, a long chain of hopeful thoughts and resolves chased one another in rapid succession through my excited brain and danced before my vision.

Confidence and self-respect, when not over-indulged, are indeed powerful weapons in the battle of life. The machinations and transitions of the Goddess of Fortune are verily wondrous to observe.

In meditating upon the standing of my mother's family I began to realize that through her I already possessed a heritage of far greater value than the competency which awaited me, and that it was my solemn duty to use it and improve it. My crestfallen state became at once transformed into one of self-reliance and ambition, for I was confident that I was already possessed of the inherent means of making something of myself. Sup-

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ported by this conviction I determined to apply myself with a will to the work before me. My first effort would be to finish my education and make myself worthy of the respect and confidence of my benefactors; and to acquire such manners and habits as would fit my changed conditions. And of all miracles to be imagined or hoped for! I could meet Miss Hewlett on a footing of social equality! Then I vaguely wondered when I should see her again, and how I should feel if I were to be formally introduced to her. I could then look upon her brother as his equal in birth and accomplishments, if indeed not in wealth!

I would write at once to Minnie Oliver and tell her all about my good luck, and tell her to tell Tom Oberlin and his sister Lucy. I determined that some day I would go back to Orrick and show old Mrs. North that it was she—not I—who had the “bad eye.” I would make Lou Burns sorry she had made that awful face at me; and the whole neighborhood there should know that I was neither to be pitied nor despised, for I had means enough to buy every one of old Bill North’s farms and give them back to the poor people who owned them, and still have enough left to live comfortably on. All of those persons who had befriended me in my obscure years should be remembered and rewarded, but those who had scorned and abused me should be shown their mistake,—and treated with silent contempt.

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But the thought upon which I dwelt longest was the firm resolution I had made while hoeing in the garden at the Springs: that if ever I made any headway in life I would set myself to the task of lightening life's burden for those poor unfortunates upon whom Fate had laid a heavy hand. This was now to be one of my missions in life. I reaffirmed this resolve, which has been kept steadily in mind and quietly in action to this day. And when my mortal remains are laid at rest and my last will and testament is probated it will be seen how faithfully I have kept my pledge.

My days of servile drudgery and bondage were past, and the uplifting power of hope swelled in my breast. Again and again my mother's last written words ran through my mind: "To Thy tender mercies, O God, I commit the charge of my poor motherless babe!" She had not died in vain—her supplication had been heard, and the Master had in due time responded after His own manner. I wondered if she could see and share my joy with me. Perhaps, after all, the early trials were to prove a blessing in disguise.

I was roused from these pleasant reveries by a gentle tap at the door, and heard the colored butler say: "Breakfast served in twenty minutes, Master Bob." And glancing at the clock on the mantel I saw it was past the hour of eight; so I hurriedly dressed and went down.

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Jerome B. Holliston was a man of considerable influence and wealth. He was largely interested in coal and oil lands, which were then rapidly increasing in value. He took me to Grafton and the Probate Court appointed him as my legal guardian; whereupon the money was turned over to him. It was not a large fortune, as fortunes are reckoned today, but it was a comfortable competency, and a portion of it was judiciously invested, while the remainder was devoted to my education.

I wrote at once to my sister and in due time she received her share of the inheritance. In the meantime Mrs. Brandon had passed away and had left her a small annuity—enough to live comfortably on and complete her education. I wrote also to Mr. Welfleet at the Springs, asking about the property, and received a prompt reply saying that the excitement had died out there, and real estate was almost unsalable.

For four years I lived with the Hollistons and went to school. During the vacation seasons I accompanied them on many trips through the northern and western States. Together we crossed time and again the path of my journey of ten or a dozen years earlier, made under widely differing conditions.

The four years of sweet companionship with these lovable Christian people amply repaid me for all the hardships of my childhood years. Indeed I do not recall that in all that time I ever heard a

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harsh word from either of them. Had I been their own child they could not have shown me greater love or consideration. Mrs. Holliston used to argue with her husband that I was morally hers, because she discovered me; while her husband would jokingly retort that I was legally his, because he was my guardian, and that if I went back on him he wouldn't give me a cent of my money.

Those four years abounded, I thought, with more happiness than is allotted to the average individual in a lifetime.

But at the end of the fourth year, late in May, Mrs. Holliston became ill, and a week later she died. As I sat by her bedside a few hours before the end came, she took my hand in both of hers and looking at me earnestly, said: "Bobby, I'm going to see your mother." She talked sweetly of other things, but after these words my grief is all that I can remember, except that my thought was that I should have two mothers in heaven. At ten minutes past four on the afternoon of that beautiful spring day she peacefully closed her eyes in Eternal Sleep.

CHAPTER XX

MORE ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE TRANSACTION—I MEET ELLA HEWLETT

EARLY in July next after Mrs. Holliston's death, Mr. Holliston, who was much broken in spirit and health, wished to spend a few weeks quietly at some healthful northern resort; so it was decided that we should go back to the Springs, where we arrived on the 11th of July, just six years from the time I first met Mrs. Holliston.

Conditions there were greatly changed. Instead of having "died out," as Mr. Welfleet had twice written, the place was in the midst of a tremendous boom, and desirable building lots near the principal spring were held at from five hundred to upwards of a thousand dollars apiece.

And imagine my astonishment to find the maple grove on my place the front yard of a quarter of a million dollar hotel! A great many people in jaunty summer costume were walking about or lounging on rustic chairs and summer bowers in the shade of my maple trees!



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Our old house was gone and our garden plot on the side hill was now a beautiful blue grass lawn. I rushed to Welfleet's old office, but was told by the tenant that he had moved to the new brick block. I hurried over there, but he was out. Then taking a carriage I went back to the hotel and inquired for the proprietor, but he too was out. I asked the clerk where and how the hotel people got that land, and he stared at me in amazement, as if he thought I was crazy—and well he might have thought so. He finally said the hotel property belonged to a Kansas City syndicate, "and that's all I know"—which was almost literally true.

I found Mr. Holliston on the front veranda, very much agitated. He was talking with an elderly gentleman who seemed to know all about the place, and volunteered the information that the land had been purchased from a lawyer by the name of Welfleet. About this time the manager came along and he corroborated the statement. Mr. Holliston explained that I was his ward and that the land belonged to me. The manager said he knew nothing about that; that the syndicate had bought the property, and held a clear title to it.

On investigation of the records we found that the deed from my father to Welfleet had been recorded, but there was no record of any deed from Welfleet to me. We also found that in selling the

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property he had received part cash and a mortgage for the balance, due in two years; that he had made several attempts to negotiate the mortgage note, but it had been noised about that the land really belonged to some minor, and his plan had been halted. He was at that time in Kansas City, and not expected back for a week.

In the meantime we found the notary who had acknowledged the papers six years before, and it was he who had spread the news that Welfleet had no rightful ownership to the property. Welfleet had told him that he had bought the property, and that the former owner was dead; but the proofs of death were lacking, and the deed running to the dead (?) boy was not satisfactorily accounted for.

The property had all been sold to the syndicate, excepting nearly an acre on the hillslope where the old house had stood, which was held at a fabulous price on account of its desirability as a building site.

A warrant was then sworn out for the arrest of Welfleet, and the County Sheriff was stationed at his office door. Two days later he appeared and was placed under arrest. He had the mortgage note in his pocket at the time, and had indorsed it as follows: "Pay to the order of Stephen R. Williamson, without recourse," under which he had signed his name. He said he had heard that I was dead; that neither of the deeds had been filed until after he received that piece of news, and that

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he had then filed only the deed running to himself, in order to avoid complications.

He made restitution by deeding me the unsold part, assigning the note and mortgage over to me, and returning a small part of the cash he had received. The balance had been spent, so the claim against him was not pressed and he was released from custody. Mr. Holliston attended to all the business for me, and gave the notary a hundred dollars for his assistance. I gave Welfleet a full release from any further claim against him, with the mutual understanding that the matter would be kept quiet and not mentioned to anyone—not even the hotel syndicate.

We heard further that the Hewletts had been at the Springs the year before, but had gone to California this season; so we did not see them.

Two letters written to my father from Richmond had been returned, and not having heard from him for five years, and finding no trace of him at the Springs, I had no idea where he was.

Leaving Mr. Holliston at the hotel I went to see my sister near where she had been attending college in Michigan, and upon returning a few days later in response to a telegram I found him in a nervous, restless condition. We then went to Kansas City, and from there to the then booming city of Omaha, Nebraska, where I was introduced to Mr. Holliston's nephew, a promising young lawyer. He advised me to study law, but I had pre-

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pared for college, and expected to take the entrance examinations during the summer.

Mr. Holliston's health continued to fail, and he decided to return home and put his affairs into shape. It was well that he did, for seven weeks later his remains were laid beside those of his wife, and once more I was left sad and homeless. But I had many bright prospects for the future, and my grief gradually wore off in the multiplicity of duties in getting my affairs settled up.

I abandoned my plans of going to college, and wrote to Mr. Holliston's nephew asking if I might study law in his office for a year or so, until I could decide definitely as to what line of business I should go into. And indeed my law studies proved in later years to be a valuable part of my education. I doubt if any line of research will broaden the mind and develop the reasoning faculties more than the study of the elementary principles of jurisprudence, followed by a careful reading of the profoundly logical opinions rendered in important cases by the country's greatest jurists. I found it especially instructive to read the masterful arguments of the dissenting Justices.

In December I bade a regretful good-by to dear old Richmond—may God forever bless the place for having domiciled two such characters as Mr. and Mrs. Holliston—and after traveling two months in the far West I landed in Omaha on the first day of February, and thought I should cer-

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tainly freeze to death in the hack on my way up Farnam Street to the New York Life Building. And five months later, early in July, when I went down the same street to take a train to go to the Springs I was equally sure that I should roast to death before I got out of the city.

Upon my arrival in Omaha, I took up quarters at the Hotel Millard and a few days later was poring over the stupid pages of Chitty's "Blackstone"; then "Kent's Commentaries" and "Parsons on Contracts." After a while I found the frequent dancing parties and Boyd's Theatre congenial diversions, and thus many a happy evening hour was whiled away, with McTague's Café always to look forward to at the close of the night's festivities.

I well remember that at the dances the boys were always in the majority, and the "wall-flowers" were nearly always of the masculine gender. We frequently engaged certain dances by telephone,—sometimes two or three weeks ahead. The more popular girls often had their programs filled, including a number of "extras," a week in advance. On one occasion the twenty numbers on the program of Sadie Carpenter were sold by auction, for the benefit of some charity, and the amount realized was nearly a hundred dollars. I had to pay twelve dollars to retain my name on her program for the first dance; but I thought it well worth the price. The old Armory on Capitol Avenue was the scene of many joyous affairs.

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After a night of dancing and feasting I used to go to the office next day and spend several hours in peaceful slumber, with my head bowed reverently over the prosy page of some law book.

But early in April, when the social activities became less distracting, I set to my work in dead earnest and put in nine hours of hard study every day,—Sunday excepted.

Early in July I managed to convince myself that my health demanded a change and rest, so I decided to go to the Springs for a few weeks. While en route I found myself becoming quite excited over the prospect of meeting Miss Hewlett. I wondered if she would seem as attractive to me now as she had appeared to me a few years ago. I had met and danced with many pretty girls in Richmond and in Omaha, and had seen many more on my travels; and it had long been my habit when meeting a particularly attractive girl to compare her charms with those of Ella Hewlett as I remembered her. I had longed to see her, and quietly to observe her movements and actions from some remote corner in the drawing room or the ball room, just to see if she fulfilled the idealistic picture so firmly fixed in my boyhood recollections. In vain I tried to convince myself that it was chiefly Minnie Oliver, and business interests, that attracted me to the Springs.

On arriving in the afternoon at the railroad station nearest the Springs I found my heart

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thumping so vigorously that it frightened me. I took a carriage and drove to the hotel; and to my supreme delight the first young lady that my eyes fell upon was Ella Hewlett! She was walking with her mother on the front veranda of the hotel, and I recognized her at once.

I must have appeared very rude, for when I saw her a short distance away coming directly toward me I stood staring at her as if I had been charmed out of my senses. She looked straight at me as she brushed by, but there was no sign of recognition; and I was glad of it. I compared her with the mental picture I had carried for seven years, and now as a young woman of almost twenty she had not lost a single attraction; she more than met my expectations. The same expressive brown eyes, the same sweet smile, and the same easy manner—she was simply the little girl grown up, with the added charm of a quiet dignity and a dawning womanly beauty.

The lackey had taken my traveling bag, and I was so flustered that I forgot to register my name at the desk, until nearly half an hour later when the boy asked me, "Is this your bag, sir?"

After being shown to my room I changed my clothes and putting on a white flannel suit I returned to the front veranda, and lighting a cigar—which I must have burned up in five minutes—I stalked up and down in a thoughtful mood, wondering whom I could get to introduce me; for I

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hadn't seen another soul there that I knew. Presently an elderly lady came up from the grove and advancing she greeted me cordially. I remembered her as Mrs. Freeman, a friend of Mr. Holliston, to whom he had introduced me the summer before. After conversing with her awhile and breaking the news of Mr. Holliston's death, I ventured to ask if she knew Mrs. Hewlett.

"Yes, indeed, I know her very well; she and Mrs. Holliston were friends." I knew that, but didn't tell her how I first came to know it.

"Since she was a friend of Mrs. Holliston," I said, "I should like to meet her."

While we were talking Mrs. Hewlett and her daughter came out on the porch, and detaining her Mrs. Freeman said: "Oh, Mrs. Hewlett, allow me to present Mr. Hardwick,—a dear friend of the Hollistons. He brings the sad news of Mr. Holliston's death."

With true cordiality Mrs. Hewlett extended her hand, then turning to her daughter who had walked on a few steps, she said: "Ella, come back here and meet Mr. Hardwick, a friend of the Hollistons."

She turned and acknowledged the introduction with a gracious smile. Then walking back she joined us in the conversation. At length the two women very considerably withdrew, leaving me alone with Miss Hewlett, and we strolled off down through the grove.

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"So you were a friend of the Hollistons, were you?"

"Yes; or rather, they were friends to me—the best I ever had."

"It seems too bad," she said with a sigh, "that those we love best have to be taken away from us."

"I hope you have suffered no such loss in your lifetime," I said.

"Yes, three years ago I lost my father, and it seems as if I shall never become reconciled to it."

I expressed my sympathy and regrets, and came very near saying that I remembered his kindness to me, but caught myself just in time.

"Did you have a pleasant season in California," I inquired at length.

"Why, how do you know I was in California?"

"I don't know how, but somehow I just knew it. I looked for you here last summer, and was disappointed not to find you."

She looked puzzled.

"I, too, was out in California in January last," I said.

"But you didn't see me there then, for we came home before that."

"No, but I saw where you had been."

"Why, do I make such awful foot-prints as all that?"

"I didn't say they were foot-prints, or that they were awful. On the contrary, the associations

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made quite another impression on me, and I regretted not having been there earlier." Her curiosity seemed to increase. Then, with a tinge of petulance: "Why should you have taken such an interest in me?"

"Why shouldn't anyone be interested in you who knew you seven years ago?"

"You seem to have an advantage over me—who are you, anyway, and where did you know me?"

"I'm nobody in particular, and I live nowhere in particular, except where people treat me well."

"But you've answered only half my question—where did you know me?"

"Do you imagine you've always traveled incognito and that such an unusual character as yours has been wholly unobserved?"

"No, I've never been ashamed of my identity, but I didn't know that my unusual character, as you call it, was such as to attract the particular notice of *strangers*."

She was now getting back at me by calling me a "stranger," and I feared that she would soon have me on the defensive. Continuing, she said: "It's unkind of you to torment me this way; now, tell me, where did you see me?"

She had cornered me; and her question was so imperative and appealing that I came near blurt-ing out the truth, but realized it would not do. "Perhaps I will tell you someday, but please don't insist upon my doing so now."

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"Just as you please," she said with a shrug, and at this moment my embarrassment was relieved by the approach of her brother. Turning to him she said: "George, this is Mr. Hardwick, of 'nowhere in particular,' but he was a dear friend of the Hollistons. Mr. Hardwick, allow me to present my brother." He extended his hand and eyed me searchingly, but his face betrayed no sign of recognition. Turning to her he inquired: "Why 'of nowhere in particular,' Ella?"

"I was only repeating his words," she said. Coming to my own defense I said: "I think it's hardly fair to your brother and me to refer so unfeelingly to my homeless condition without explaining how the remark originated."

"Oh, please pardon me—I didn't mean to hurt you"—at the same time extending her hand—"you will forgive me, won't you?" Her brother took in the situation, and turning to me said: "You don't look very forlorn or homeless."

Together we walked to the hotel, and leaving them on the veranda, I went up, unpacked my trunk and slipped into my dinner clothes.

CHAPTER XXI

GETTING ACQUAINTED

AFTER dinner Miss Hewlett and her brother walked arm-in-arm back and forth on the veranda in the customary after-dinner walking race; while I lighted a cigar and watched the couple, thinking how like seven years ago, and yet how unlike it! After racing to and fro several times they marched up to me and, with a mischievous glance at her brother, Miss Hewlett said: "My brother would like to have you join us, if you will."

"Thank you; now that you have run several laps, I may be able to keep up with you." In due time her brother, remembering some engagement, left us alone. A few minutes later we were seated in one of the rustic summer houses among the maples. At length she said: "Do you know, I've been thinking about you."

"I don't know why anyone should take any special interest in me—what have I done?"

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"Please don't be sarcastic. I've been thinking of you as the mysterious Mr. Hardwick; but I think I've solved the mystery."

"It was kind of your brother to have you ask me to walk with you, and even more considerate of him to leave you in my charge while he went to keep that engagement."

At first she looked a trifle confused, then with some conviction she replied: "I didn't know that I was left in your charge."

"Then let me be in your charge, since you know the place here better than I."

"I'm not quite sure that I would care to assume such a grave responsibility," she said.

"She's willing to cross swords with me," I thought.

"You have changed since seven years ago," I said.

"I'm sorry if you are disappointed in me now, after knowing me for seven years."

"I didn't say that."

"But you implied as much."

After a moment she said: "I think I know who you are—do you know Dick Kirby?"

Chancing a random shot—"Do you mean Dick Kirby, of St. Louis?"

"Yes, yes, that's it—I place you now. You were with him at the New Orleans Exposition and you saw me there nearly seven years ago."

"I'm sorry to say you're wrong, for I never heard of him before."

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"Honest?"

"Honest." She hung her head thoughtfully, then—"Were you here six years ago?"

"Great Scott! has she discovered me?" I thought. "No, I was not here six years ago, nor five years ago."

"I think you are the most tantalizing man I ever saw, and you're taking an unfair advantage of a woman's curiosity. I'm not in the habit of being tormented." And she got up as if to go.

She was visibly irritated, as shown by the look in her eyes and the color that sprang to her face; and it was evident that she had been accustomed to having things her own way.

"Please don't go—let me explain," I said. "I really didn't mean to torment you. You would be sorry if I were to tell you the truth about the circumstances under which I saw you; that is, you would pity me—and I hate to be pitied. So let us just imagine that I never saw you until today; then perhaps someday I will tell you more."

"Then you will tell me someday?"

"I certainly hope to, and shall, just as soon as conditions will permit."

"What are the conditions?"

"The conditions are a friendship that will sustain the closest confidence." I was delighted by her remark—"That, I hope, is not impossible."

We talked at some length on different topics and about places of common interest—for she had trav-

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eled extensively in the West and Northwest. At length we fell to discussing the Springs, and the rapid growth of the village.

"I remember," said she, "when this was a very small place. We came here the next year after the spring was discovered, and the water helped mamma a great deal. The only large hotel then was the one down near the spring. I remember when this lovely grove was almost a wilderness."

"Yes," I said, "I presume it was owned by some old fossil who got a barrellful of money for it."

"No, I understand it was in the name of a lawyer here, but someone questioned his title to it, and there was some talk of its belonging to a boy who used to live here with his father. But he disappeared, and was never heard from. I heard papa say that the building plans of this hotel were held up nearly a year; then came the news that the boy was dead. Poor little fellow! he probably died without ever knowing the value of his property."

"That's all very interesting to me—what else did you hear about it—who questioned the title?"

"A man in the village. Papa bought a place up there on the hillside"—she pointed up toward the spot where our old house had stood—"the year he died, and when the notary was about to acknowledge the deed, or something like that, he called papa aside and told him the lawyer didn't own the

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property at all. He said it was really owned by a little boy who used to work at the hotel. So papa was afraid there might be some trouble, and he didn't take it."

"How strange!" I said. "I bought that property last summer from a lawyer named Welfleet." She started suddenly and looked at me in amazement.

"You bought it! and pray what are you going to do with it?"

"I don't know; perhaps in ten or a dozen years I may build a house on it, provided I can find someone to occupy it."

"You wouldn't have the least trouble in renting it," she said, "if you were to build it tomorrow."

"I hadn't thought of renting it."

"Oh, but I must tell you more about that little boy."

"Yes, do; for since I have his property, I'm anxious to hear more about him."

"Well, the way we came to know about him was that he was hurt in a struggle with some rough boys who had attacked my brother on the sidewalk near the hotel. Then when he got well his father came and took him away. I remember him so well—how sad and pale he looked that day. Papa and the Hollistons looked for him, and Mrs. Holliston seemed much worried about his disappearance; for she had received some good news for him." I was thankful for the protection of the

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partial darkness in the summer bower, for she looked at me earnestly.

"Did you hear what the good news was?" I asked.

"No, it was something about his people."

"Do you remember his name?"

"No, I don't remember, but you can get it from the hotel people."

"Thank the Lord for that," I thought, for I did not care to become a cynosure for all the guests in the house.

"You say he defended your brother?"

"Yes, he was a brave little fellow, but seemed always to have a disconsolate look. I used to watch him sometimes from our window as he came up from the spring with water, and he would trudge along with his head bowed as if in a brown study. I used to pity him, for they kept him on the go all the time; and just think of it! they gave him only a dollar a week!"

"You say you pitied him—you have heard that pity is akin to love?"

"Yes, but you wouldn't expect me to fall in love with a little urchin like that, would you?" I nearly fell off my seat—but managed to say: "Why, no—of course not. I was only thinking of a case where a young woman of culture and social position married a poor, but honest, young man of respectable parentage, and it was through pity that she first learned to love him."

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"I'm afraid," she said, "if ever I should be foolish enough to get married, I should have to be impelled by motives other than pity. Besides, I think it's a great mistake for people of such widely differing social positions to marry—their tastes are so different; and divorces are the usual result."

"I suppose your friend Dick Kirby is quite a *beau ideal*, is he not?"

"No, not at all. Though his father is wealthy, he is a very ordinary young man,—not a person I should think of inviting to my home."

"And yet you call him 'Dick,' and said you suspected me of being at the Exposition with him."

"I formed that habit because my brother knows him and always calls him 'Dick.' And as for associating with him, of course you know boys are not very exacting in the choice of their companions. But with girls it's different when they choose their friends among the young men."

By this time we had reached the front steps of the hotel, and just before bidding her good night, I said, "I'm going away tomorrow."

With a sudden look of disappointment, which made me glad, she said: "Going away! going away where?"

"I'm going to drive over to Orrick in the morning."

"To be gone how long?"

"Two days."

"Oh, is that all—you startled me at first. I

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thought you were leaving for good." And extending her hand she smiled sweetly, as she said: "I won't say good-by,—because that implies too long a separation,—but just *au revoir*—" and she ran up the steps, looking back over her shoulder as she passed through the door.

CHAPTER XXII

"BLOOD 'ILL TELL OUT EVERY TIME"

NEXT morning the surrey I had engaged the day before came up, and as I was whirled away down the drive behind a dashing pair of bays Miss Hewlett stood on the front veranda waving good-by with her handkerchief.

We stopped at the Vaughans, and as I passed through the gate, a thought suddenly occurred to me. Mrs. Vaughan answered my rap at the front door. "I'm looking for a boy by the name of Bob Hardwick—can you give me any information about him?" I asked.

She looked me over, then after thinking for a moment, she inquired: "Does he live around here?"

"I don't know—he used to live at the Springs, about seven years ago, and I learned that he spent a few weeks here."

Her face lighted up instantly. "Why, Lord bless you, yes, I remember the poor child now; his father took him away somewhere. I'm glad

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somebody's taken enough interest in him to look him up. I wish I knew something about him, but I've never heard of him since he left here."

She looked so sympathetic and showed such an eager interest in the boy that I was tempted to throw my arms about her without another word; but thought how ridiculous it would seem to her.

"Is your daughter Sallie in?" I asked. She started back in surprise—"Do you know Sallie?"

"I should think I ought to—I used to play dolls with her, and we used to jump off the roof of that old shed together."

She retreated another step or two into the house, and fearing she would think I was crazy and slam the door in my face, I continued—"And I'm Bob Hardwick, the very boy I've been looking for."

She gazed at me a moment, then with a deep breath—"Well, as I live and breathe!"—whereupon she threw her arms about me and hugged me in true motherly fashion.

I could no more get away before dinner than I could have broken away from my own mother. She made me sit down and tell her all about myself, while she stared at me in breathless astonishment; exclaiming every little while—"Well, as I live and breathe!" While we were talking Sallie came in—a rosy-cheeked maiden with a bashful look. Upon seeing me she turned to leave the room.

"Sallie, come here, dear,—who do you think this

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is?" She looked at me, then hung her head—"I don't know, mother."

"Well, you'll faint when I tell you—it's little Bobby Hardwick." She appeared a little dubious, and didn't seem to remember me, until advancing toward her I extended my hand and asked her if she remembered her old flaxen-haired doll, "Nanny," that I once hid from her up in the attic, and how we used to make pop-guns out of elder—not forgetting to mention the time she threw a dipperful of soapsuds into my face. Then it all came back to her, and she laughed heartily.

After telling the hired man to show my driver where to feed the horses, Mrs. Vaughan made me sit in the roasting hot kitchen and talk to her all the while she was getting dinner. Without a word of comment she made a large portion of that incomparable dish, toasted buttermilk biscuits and cream. She placed it directly in front of my plate at the table, and when we were seated she removed the lid from the dish, saying: "There! I guess you'll remember that."

Mr. Vaughan was in town—for this was Saturday—so I didn't see him. With many regretful good-by's and God-bless-you's, I left soon after dinner, and a little more than an hour's drive brought us to the large oak tree 'neath the branches of which I had eaten my lunch and rested my weary body in an hour's sleep just seven years ago, lacking a month.

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We drove on, and late in the afternoon I felt a peculiar faintness as we came in sight of the old place. A thousand thoughts and conjectures ran through my brain as the carriage rolled up the roadway approaching Mr. North's house.

"Are they living?" I thought—for Minnie Oliver never mentioned them in her late letters—would they know me? and was dear Mrs. Jones still toiling away to keep the interest paid up? If she was, I had determined to accomplish her release in some way, for I felt that I owed her a great deal. She had advised and encouraged me in my purpose to break away and go to the Springs five years ago the preceding May.

We drove up in front of the house and I saw Mr. North seated in the shade out in the front yard. He rose feebly and walked toward us, supported by a heavy cane. He looked just as he did when I first saw him, except that he was a trifle bent and his hair was longer and whiter.

"Does Mr. North live here?" I asked.

"Yas, suh, I've lived here more'n forty year."

"Do you know me?" His keen grey eyes scrutinized me long and carefully.

"No, I reckon not. I don't reckon ye come from aroun' these parts—yer some city chap, ain't ye?"

"No, I'm a country chap, born, bred and brought up on a farm."

"Wa'al, yer about the finest haired farmer I ever see'd—how d' ye wuk in them fine clothes?"

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"Farmers don't always work—at least I never saw you work any."

"What air ye sellin'—sewin' machines? er light-nin' rods?"

"I'm not selling—I'm *buying blue grass seed*—have you got any?"

"No, I hain't none this year." Alighting, and handing him my card, I said: "If you have any later, let me know, won't you?"

Putting on his spectacles, he looked hard at the name, then gasped—"Why—why—why, ye're not Bob, air ye?"

"That used to be my name here five or six years ago."

"Wa'al, I'll boun'!" and throwing his arms about me as his cane dropped to the ground, he hugged me with the force of a bear. Then holding me off he said: "God bless ye, Bob, ye're jest the sort of boy thet I allus told Ann ye wuz." Turning to the house he called—"Ann! Ann! come out here!"

"Ann" appeared at the front door. She was bent, and very feeble. A shudder crept over me as I looked into her face again.

"What ye want?"

Pointing to me he said: "Look here—d' ye know 'im?"

"No, I don't reckon I do—what about 'im?"

"He's a long lost friend o' your'n, 'n he's come ter visit ye." With a disgusted look she turned

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back into the house, remarking—"Ye're allus up to some prank or other."

I handed him his cane and we entered the room, where she sat with her uncomely face screwed up in a scornful way. When she looked at me I involuntarily turned to leave her presence; but Mr. North was too fond of a joke to let such a good chance slip, so he caught me by the arm and almost shouted at her: "Ann, this is our long lost son—ain't ye gwine ter speak to 'im?"

"Bill North, ye've done pestered me enough with yer crazy goin's on, 'n I don't want ye to bother me no mo'."

"Wa'al, ef ye don't know this boy, ye've been drinkin' agin, 'n thet's all there is about it."

She sat looking into the empty fireplace, and now she fairly shook with rage. She was so furious that she stammered and seemed unable to make any retort—something quite unusual for her. Mr. North's face flamed with joy, for he loved to torment her occasionally. To me the situation had become embarrassing, and I wondered which end of the joke I fitted on,—the butt or the point.

Finally Mr. North straightened out his face and said: "Look, Ann! I never was more serious in my life—this is our Bob—thet little ornery Lordforsaken Bob Hardwick! Ye know Minnie Oliver told us about his discoverin' his mother's people 'n git-tin' rich in a night."

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She glanced up at me quickly, and upon meeting my eyes she looked down again as she said: "Wa'al, blood 'll tell out every time, sooner er later, 'n I allus did tell ye thet ye made a big mistake in a-lettin' 'im go. I know'd all the time he hed good breedin'." It occurred to me to wonder what kind of blood she had in her, if any at all.

I was glad to escape from her, and with Mr. North I walked slowly about the old place. It looked forsaken. The weeds had grown up everywhere, and things had gone to decay very rapidly. The animals were all gone, except one horse and a cow.

"Would ye like ter see yer old room, Bob?" inquired Mr. North as we entered the house again.

"No, thank you, I think I'll forego that pleasure this trip."

Mrs. Jones' younger son had saved up five hundred dollars, and Mr. North having accepted that sum in full release of the mortgage, the dear motherly widow had returned to her little farm to spend the remainder of her days quietly with her older son who had married and settled there.

I learned from Mr. North that Lou Burns—the girl who made the face at me—had married—someone I did not know—and had gone to live on a farm a few miles away.

The sight of Mrs. North and the surroundings gave rise to so many disagreeable memories, that were it not for my desire to see Minnie Oliver and

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Tom Oberlin I should have returned to the Springs that very night.

I have previously remarked that the events attending my first winter at school here are enjoyable to look back upon; but this applies only to their view in the perspective. In retrospection they did not appear mingled with their unhappy accessories; but now that I came into close proximity with the scene of my boyhood experiences it was like going up to a painting and examining it at close range in a bad light, after having viewed it from a distance with the lights properly reflected so as to bring out only its best qualities.

But I stayed over night,—having been assigned to the best room in the house,—and next morning I drove over to the old Baptist church at the cross-roads.

The first familiar faces I met were those of Tom Oberlin and Minnie Oliver. Minnie had now blossomed out into beautiful womanhood. She came forward and greeted me cordially, but I noticed Tom was a trifle distant. After chatting over old times for a few minutes, Tom laid his hand on my shoulder, saying: "Can I see you alone a minute?"

We excused ourselves from Minnie and walked over toward the graveyard. Turning to me he looked me squarely in the face,—“Bob, you’ve got the advantage of me, with your money and fine manners. When I go to see Minnie she’s always talkin’ about you, and the nice letters you write

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her. You know Minnie liked you when you was here, and I believe she still likes you; but I'm in love with her, and have been for more'n a year. Now, tell me, old man, honestly, have you come here to—to take her away?"

I saw the tears in his eyes, and if I had had any such intentions (and we need not here discuss the matter as to whether I had or had not, further than to say that my letters had been non-committal) I should certainly have abandoned them on the spot, for as I looked into the honest appealing face of the boy—now grown to young manhood—to whom I owed so much, a lump seemed to rise in my throat, and take away my breath as I tried to answer.

Taking his hand I said: "Tom, you did me a kindness years ago that I've never forgotten, and if I were in love with forty girls, and you could win one of them, you should have your pick of the whole bunch. Now, go ahead and make love to Minnie, and God bless you both. You shall never see or hear of me in these parts again as long as there is any chance of my being in your way." He clasped my hand, and with a trembling voice said: "Bob, ye're the same old brick."

How to break away without appearing rude to Minnie was a question that troubled me greatly. She had said: "Of course you are coming to dinner," and I had accepted. The only way out of it seemed to be to insist upon Tom's coming too;

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then I would have a chance to talk to them together and not be thrown with Minnie alone. So upon returning to her I said: "Minnie, I associate you and Tom together in so many happy memories that I should like to talk with you both together; and since I must return this afternoon I should like to have Tom included in the dinner invitation."

She hesitated and her face clouded for an instant, then forcing a smile she said: "Why, yes; Tom knows he's always welcome at our house."

The dinner passed pleasantly amid chatting and laughter over incidents of common interest, and in directing my conversation to Minnie I took especial pains to praise the good qualities of Tom. "He's the one boy in all the world whose kindness I remember above that of all others."

She nodded acquiescently, but I doubt if she was wholly sincere, for when I praised Tom she would break in and ask some question about what business I was going into, or where I expected to live.

Tom looked happier than Minnie as I left them together at the front gate, and drove back to say good-by to the Norths.

From that day I have never seen either of them, though I still hear from them occasionally, and their three children are now attending the school on the very same site where I first met Tom.

As I rode along I saw the old stump beside which I used to empty my lunch pail. A painful

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stillness hovered over the landscape, broken only now and then by the twitter of a bird.

I was glad to turn my face toward the Springs, and as I left the neighborhood wrapt in its Sabbath-day quiet, I had no regrets in feeling that I should probably never visit the scene again. The past twenty-four hours had seemed like a semi-unpleasant dream about a medley of faces and conditions, which amid my new environments had now become strange and somewhat mythical. Anxious to return to more congenial surroundings, I urged the driver to hurry along.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIRST STAGES OF LOVE

WHEN I arrived at the hotel it was late, and being wearied from the journey I went at once to my room. I had not slept well the night before, for I had dreamed that I was back at the Norths working again for my board, and that all my good fortune was but an illusion. It frightened me so that I half awoke and sat up in bed staring about in the dark. Putting out my hand I felt the rough logs of the wall at the side of the bed, and I almost cried out with terror, for I realized that I was back in the old house, and for a moment couldn't figure out how I got there.

When at length I got myself wide enough awake to think clearly, and the whole situation dawned upon me, I dreaded to go back to sleep for fear the awful dream would return. The result was, I had lain awake most of the night.

Now that I was back at the hotel I felt safe in going to sleep. I wondered if Miss Hewlett

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were already in dreamland, and if she would be glad to see me at the breakfast table.

Early next morning before breakfast I strolled off up the hillside to the site where our old house had stood. Not so much as a vestige of it remained. I walked out among the trees and brush on the side of the bluff where my father had shot at the rabbit, and laughed outright as the scene recurred to me. Then I glanced about to see if anyone was looking at me and perhaps wondering if I had strayed off from some lunatic asylum.

As I returned down the slope, so familiar in my recollections, a strangely disagreeable sensation came over me and I wondered, as indeed I had many times before, if I had really grown away from those conditions, or if I were walking about in a sleeping vision. I had often thought back on the memories of my early life as upon a vague and misty scene in some other world, which still held me in periodical terror of being called back through a dreadful awakening! The abject horror of it all! It seemed impossible that such a transformation could be within the bounds of human possibilities, and I could not reconcile my present situation with the experiences of the past. I was frequently haunted by a portentous feeling which I can vaguely imagine as being akin to that of an escaped convict who lives in constant fear of being found out and put back in prison. These fears,

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which during the past four years had gradually worn off, seemed now to seize me with renewed force as I came face to face with my boyhood associations. I hurried to the hotel to escape from such apprehensions, and was glad to get inside and divert my mind to other thoughts.

But upon entering the dining room I became much disconcerted when I saw a strange young man sitting at the breakfast table with Miss Hewlett and her mother. He seemed two or three years older than I, and had a handsome patrician face, with dark blue eyes and coal black hair. Miss Hewlett seemed radiant with happiness, and they were so absorbed in each other that I passed them and took my seat two tables beyond without being observed by either. As I sat down Mrs. Hewlett—who was facing me—spoke to her daughter, who turned around and smiled pleasantly.

I don't know what I ordered, but the waiter must have thought I had been fasting during my two days' absence, for I never saw such a breakfast as he set before me, declaring that I had ordered every bit of it. After drinking a cup of coffee I left the dining room and repaired to one of the summer houses in the grove to enjoy my cigar and a book; but the cigar tasted stale and the book seemed stupid. I read three chapters absent-mindedly, then shutting the book up in disgust I rammed my hands into my trousers pockets

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and stalked off down the board walk toward the spring.

After going about half way I turned back, as I did not wish to straggle off down there alone and cogitate over the events of former years, for my thoughts were then engaged with more important problems. As I came near the hotel I saw Miss Hewlett and the young man seated in the grove a short distance ahead, and turning abruptly I started off blindly in another direction through the trees; but she had observed me, and called to me. When I approached she introduced me to her friend, a Mr. Martin. Of course I had to go through the customary form of saying how glad I was to meet him; but I doubt if he was any more pleased to meet me than I was to meet him. Turning to me Miss Hewlett inquired if I had had a pleasant trip.

"Yes, I did and I didn't; but on the whole, I'm glad I went."

"Are there any pretty girls in Orrick?" she asked, as she canted her head a little sidewise, with a coquettish twinkle in her eye.

"I don't know, but if so, they must be away for the summer."

"Oh, then perhaps that accounts for your losing your appetite at breakfast, and leaving your book unread in the summer house." I thought she had observed my actions rather closely, and wondered if she were really interested.

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"Why, Ella, do you think Mr. Hardwick is in love with some country girl?" chirped in Mr. Martin.

"I'm not quite sure about that," she said. "Mr. Hardwick is a very mysterious young man, and I fancy he had some purpose in coming to the Springs."

"You never guessed anything more nearly correct," I said.

Then turning to Mr. Martin, with an air of forced cordiality I said: "I trust that you find the hotel and the people here very agreeable, Mr. Martin."

"Oh, yes, thank you, I do; but I'm only here for a few days. My business does not permit me to remain away very long at a time." I didn't inquire what his business was, but afterward learned that he was paying teller in a large St. Louis bank.

"Then in that case I'll not interrupt you and Miss Hewlett any further, as you doubtless have many things of mutual interest to talk over."

"Oh, no," broke in Miss Hewlett, "don't hurry away—we were chatting quite at random. Won't you join us in a tramp to the spring?" Together we walked along, and I admired her cleverness in dividing her attention equally between us, and attempting to make us both quite at our ease.

Nevertheless, I couldn't help feeling that three was a crowd, so excusing myself at the spring, under the pretense of wanting to see an old friend, I went over to call on Doctor Beals; but upon

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second thought I saw that it wouldn't do to reveal my identity to him, for he might noise it about, and Miss Hewlett would hear of it. So I sauntered back to the hotel.

As I entered the office door I heard someone call my name, and turning about I saw Mrs. Freeman standing with a young lady at the front entrance to the reception room.

"Won't you come here just a moment, Mr. Hardwick?" she said. I walked over and she introduced me to her companion, a coquettish, blue-eyed girl of about eighteen, whose name was Ethelynde Norton. She had recently returned with her mother from Paris, where she had spent two years at school. At first I thought her a trifle affected, but she proved to be witty and vivacious. She had been for a horseback ride, and while talking she kept tapping the toe of her dainty high-arched boot with her riding crop. Her graceful girlish figure set becomingly in a habit cut after the latest fashion, and her regular features, healthy sun-browned complexion and winsome smile completed an altogether irresistible combination.

Mrs. Freeman chatted with us awhile, then left us together, with the remark: "Miss Norton is very fond of riding and dancing, and I'm sure you'll find her a pleasant companion."

While we were talking Miss Hewlett and Mr. Martin came up on the veranda, but they apparently did not know Miss Norton. I found that

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she had arrived Saturday morning, and knew no one there but Mrs. Freeman,—a friend of her mother.

At the mid-day luncheon I saw Miss Norton seated at the table with her mother and a strange young man, and I felt like asking Mrs. Freeman if she couldn't introduce me to a girl without any encumbrances. But he was a pale looking chap who seemed to have nothing to say, so he did not look like a formidable rival in the race for the favor of a girl of her temperament.

In the afternoon I walked to the spring with Miss Norton, and she told me of a number of New England resorts where she had summered with her parents in her childhood days—including Rye Beach and Maplewood in New Hampshire, and Poland Springs, Maine. She said that the next summer they were booked at Poland Springs from July 1. I told her of my intention to spend a part of the following summer in the East, and she remarked: "How romantic it would be if we should happen to meet there!"

When we returned to the hotel her mother was waiting for her to go driving, and I returned to my book. Presently Mrs. Hewlett came along, and seeing me with the book closed, she said: "Are you quite satisfied with no other company than your own?"

"Not so at all, for I hate dull company—may I bring you a chair?"

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"No, thank you," she said, "I'm just on my way to the spring."

"Here," I thought, "is my chance to get the history of that man Martin"; so I asked permission to accompany her. We talked of the Hollistons as we strolled leisurely along, and at an opportune moment I inquired about Mr. Martin, and found that he had been a friend of the family for the past five years, and for a year or more he had been very attentive to Miss Hewlett.

I soon discovered, however, that no matter how much Miss Hewlett thought of him, her mother was not very enthusiastic over his marked attentions of late.

"Your daughter is a very charming girl, and I have enjoyed one or two chats with her."

"Yes, so she told me. She has spoken of you a number of times. She rather enjoys matching wits with young men, and Mr. Martin would stand much better with her if he didn't always humor her and give in to her whims. Like many young ladies, she wants her own way, but is not pleased when she has it." I thought this a point worth noting.

After dinner I accepted Miss Hewlett's invitation to promenade, and her brother walked with Miss Norton, to whom he had been introduced during the day. After walking myself almost out of breath, I suggested a stroll down the road.

"Let's walk down to the spring," said Miss Hewlett.

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"No! I'll climb the bluff, or wade the river with you, but I'll be hanged if I go to that spring again today. I've done nothing under the sun all day but trot back and forth on that old hot board walk until I'm tired of it."

"You didn't look so tired when you were walking down with Miss Norton," she remarked.

I made no reply.

"You found her very interesting company, I hope—" she said in a questioning way.

"Yes, she found me alone, whiling away my time over a dull book, and was kind enough to dispel the monotony of what promised to be a dreary afternoon."

"That was very kind of her," she added in a distant way.

"No more kindness, I trust, than you would have shown me had you been disengaged."

"I was not engaged," she said sharply.

"Oh, pardon me; I was not aware that Mr. Martin had left."

"He has not left; and besides, he doesn't occupy my entire attention."

We were wandering aimlessly along the road in the opposite direction from the spring. At length I said: "Mr. Martin is a handsome chap, isn't he?"

"Y-e-s, you might call him so."

"And full of wit, I presume."

"No, not exactly, but he comes from a good family, and has a pleasing appearance."

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"So he has; and I don't wonder that any girl should be attracted by his good looks and easy manner." She was silent for a few moments. Finally she said: "Do you find Mr. Martin a very interesting subject to talk about?"

"But I thought *you* would, and my desire to please you outweighs all other considerations."

"Then you can please me easiest by saying nothing more about him for the present."

"How soon may I talk about him again?"

"Not until I give you permission."

"Then what *shall* I talk about?"

"Yourself, for instance; tell me more about yourself."

"Well, in the first place, I have neither a home nor a mother—"

"Oh, I'm sorry now that I forced you to tell me that," she interrupted.

"Let me correct myself—I would not play upon your sympathy and kind-heartedness. I really never knew my mother, for she died in my infancy; and while I have no permanent home, I am very comfortably, though transiently, quartered in Omaha."

"Yes, go on."

"What more shall I say?"

"Tell me about your boyhood—who brought you up after your mother died?"

"No one brought me up—like Topsy, I just 'grow'd' up."

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"Well, for one having no assistance, you 'grow'd' up pretty well-proportioned."

"Thank you."

"You are in business in Omaha?"

"No, I have no business, therefore I travel much of the time to save household expenses."

"You're joking with me now—can't you be serious?"

"I've had a terribly serious time all my life, and it's cost me a lot of fun; so I'm going to take things comfortably awhile, until I go to house-keeping; then I'll be ready to settle down to serious business."

"And where do you expect to begin this house-keeping?"

"That will depend entirely upon circumstances."

We stopped in the road and faced each other as we turned to retrace our steps. She looked at me earnestly for a moment, and I thought she appeared more beautiful than ever.

"You are indeed a hard person to understand; I don't know why I should take more than a passing interest in you—possibly it is feminine curiosity—but I have thought about you a great deal; and in all my life I think I never met anyone quite like you. I shall not be content until you stop teasing me and tell me the truth, as you promised you would do as soon as we became good friends."

"And in all *my* life I never met anyone quite like you," I said. "But," I continued, "as to our be-

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coming good friends,—I've heard that close friendships seldom result from mere summer acquaintanceships at resorts like this."

"That is perhaps true, in a general sense, but don't you think there are exceptions?"

"I hope so—suppose we prove it!"

"Agreed!" she said quickly, as she extended her hand, and we sauntered back to the hotel.

That night I retired to my room in a state of mental abstraction. My chest was heaving and my heart was thumping away as if I had been in a foot-race. Before my mental vision I pictured a medley of girls and young men, disjointed sentences in conversation, and events, all in confusion, and I couldn't figure out the relationship in which I stood to any of them.

I was miserably happy, and happily miserable,—as I presume a young man frequently is when first he feels Cupid twitching at his heart-strings, without really knowing what ails him. I *knew* I was not in love, because I had never thought seriously of such a thing; and certainly a fellow couldn't fall in love without thinking it all over carefully and making up his mind in advance.

But why was I so strangely confused at breakfast,—ordering half the dishes on the bill of fare, without wanting anything but a cup of coffee and some toast? Finally I thought: "For heaven's sake! isn't this just the sort of asinine feeling that comes over people who are in love?"

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I had danced and attended theatres with other girls, and never inquired or cared a rap whether they had one admirer or a dozen. Neither jealousy nor envy had ever before entered my heart; and why should I now make such a fuss with myself because Ella Hewlett had an ardent suitor? Minnie Oliver, who held a tender place in my memory, and who had written me many endearing letters, had been gracefully surrendered to Tom, and why not let Ella Hewlett have Martin, if she wanted him? But somehow this seemed entirely different.

I thought Miss Hewlett appeared to take an interest in me, but whether it was the result of mere feminine curiosity, or something deeper, I couldn't tell.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ADVANCED STAGES OF LOVE

ON Wednesday night the regular mid-week hop took place, and most of the young ladies were charmingly gowned after the latest fashions. Miss Norton was easily the most elaborately dressed girl of the lot, in her wonderful Paris creation of ribbons and fluffs, and she made a dashing ballroom figure. She was as easy and graceful in the whirl of a waltz as she was in the saddle, which is saying a great deal. Miss Hewlett was becomingly attired in a close-fitting satin gown of turquoise blue.

At dinner twelve couples were grouped around a large table, in the center of which was a huge bouquet of roses. It was a joyous looking crowd, and doubtless some of us felt as happy as we looked. I was paired with Miss Norton, and Miss Hewlett—who sat opposite me—looked serenely happy with Mr. Martin at her elbow. I thought he leaned over much nearer her than there was any necessity for, but as long as she appeared to enjoy it, why should

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I concern myself about it? But I did, just the same.

When the dance began he entered the first cotillion with her, but in the first exchange of partners she glided up to me and we whirled away around the hall. As I slipped my arm around her slender waist in the usual formal manner in falling in with the waltz music I felt a thrill such as I had never before experienced in a ballroom. After the last half we walked out on the side veranda for a breath of fresh air.

"You looked extremely contented beside Miss Norton at dinner," she said.

"Yes, but not half as contented as you looked with your St. Louis friend leaning over almost in your lap," I replied.

"He's going away soon," she said after a short silence.

Another silence of a few seconds was broken by her remark—"You've danced before, haven't you?"

"Yes, thank you—once or twice. Why, were you terribly bored? I tried not to step on your feet."

"Well, if you'll ask me for the next dance, my answer will prove whether I was bored or not."

The next dance was the new Berlin schottische, and only four couples danced—the others—among them Mr. Martin—not being familiar with the step. Young Hewlett danced with Miss Norton, and as we circled the room I saw Martin glare at

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me with envious eyes. After that dance Miss Hewlett said: "Let's 'cut' the next"; so we strolled down through the grove. When we returned Mr. Martin met us at the door—

"Why, Ella, I've been looking all over the place for you—this is our dance and it's nearly over!" and the music stopped as he spoke. With an air of grave innocence she said: "Really, is that so? I didn't know it had begun."

One pleasant evening about three weeks later as I strolled along the road with Ella we were discussing incidents of our quarrel the night before, when she had retired early to her rooms, pleading a headache.

Having now ended our discussion, and arriving at no satisfactory solution of the questions at issue we walked along in silence, with the width of the road between us.

Presently she said: "Bob, I'm convinced that I don't like you any more."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"You're not either."

"I am."

"Well, you needn't be, for it'll do you no good."

"When did you arrive at such a ponderous conclusion?" I said.

"Last night—about one o'clock."

"Strange coincidence—I came to the same conclusion at about the same hour. What kept you

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awake?—thinking of my shortcomings, I suppose.”

“Yes.”

“And considering everything, you decided that you didn’t like me.”

“Yes.”

“Then you took the trouble to come out with me tonight just to tell me about it, so I might learn it from your own lips.”

“Yes.”

“How considerate of you not to keep me longer in suspense!”

She made no answer.

“Then we can’t be friends any more?” I asked.

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t like you any more.”

“Well, I don’t blame you—I’ve hated myself lately, and I guess everybody else does too.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” she said; and we continued to walk quietly along.

“Bob?”

“Yes, Ella.”

“Who is Sadie?”

I started suddenly—“Sadie who?”

“That’s what I asked you.”

“Oh, she’s a girl in Omaha.”

“She writes to you?”

“Occasionally.”

“Is she pretty?”

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"Yes."

"What did you tell Ethel Norton about her yesterday?"

"Nothing in particular, except that she's a good dancer, and rides horseback."

"Why were you so secretive? You never told me about her."

"There was nothing much to tell."

"You're in love with her."

"I'm not."

"You *are*."

"I'm *not*, and besides, what do you care?—you say you don't like me."

"Then you admit it—you *do* love her!"

We had stopped, and I advanced a step toward her; but putting out her hand she said: "Don't touch me—I could hate you."

"All right, if that pleases you, go ahead. I tried to feel that way toward you more than fifty times while you were carrying on your desperate flirtation with that Kansas City chap a few days ago. Possibly you'll be more successful than I was."

"But, really I didn't like him."

"No, I suppose not,—no more than you do me; but you seem to have a variety of ways of expressing your dislikes. It's too bad that people you don't like should inflict themselves upon you. Fortunately you'll soon be rid of me."

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to leave here very soon."

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"Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"For the reason that I didn't know it myself until tonight."

"Is it a matter of business that takes you away?"

"No, not exactly."

At length we reached the front steps of the hotel, and halting on the first step, she turned to me,—“Bob, when do you expect to leave?”

"Tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock."

"Is there nothing that could change your purpose?"

"Yes, one thing."

"What is it?" she said quickly.

"It is this: that you stamp your foot again and tell me, with that same sweet, roguish look, that you could hate me."

"I *won't*!" she said, as she ran up the steps and disappeared.

It was a gay season, with frequently recurring coaching parties, horseback rides, drives and dances. At the beginning of the friendship, I had endeavored to persuade myself that I had no intention of falling in love, but soon found myself becoming the helpless, though submissive, victim of a hitherto unknown passion.

Our courtship soon resolved itself into the conventional form so familiar to all lovers, both young and old. The person who can tell anything that

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is really new in the game of love-making must have had a wonderful experience or else be possessed of a prodigious imagination, neither of which is among my attributes.

July and August slipped quickly by. On the first of September many of the guests left for home or other resorts. Miss Norton and her mother had left for the White Mountains the last week in August, and the Hewletts were to leave for home on the tenth of September; then in the winter they were going to California. I had prepared to leave for Omaha on the second, and it was now past eleven o'clock on the night of the first. I sat with Miss Hewlett in a summer-house in the grove.

We had long since forgotten—or at least I had—all about Mr. Martin. He had promptly forgiven Miss Hewlett for “cutting” the dance. Next day she had asked me what I should have done if she had cut a dance with me, to which I promptly replied: “I should never have spoken to you again as long as I lived.”

“Wouldn’t you, if I asked your forgiveness?” she had said.

“Did you beg Martin’s forgiveness?” I asked quickly.

“Indeed I did not; it wasn’t necessary to ask it, and I knew it.”

As we now sat together in the bower I puffed at my cigar, and she chatted gayly about things in

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general—of the many pleasant hours we had spent together, walking, riding, dancing, and what not.

At length she said: "Bob, do you know why I liked you from the beginning?"

"No, I haven't the slightest idea."

"Well, in the first place, you excited my curiosity; then afterward I liked you because you are the only man I ever knew who would fight with me, and wouldn't give in to me. I don't know why it is, but in the last year or two I seem to have developed an unnatural craving for contest; and you seem to have satisfied it."

"Oh, I see—you've been using me as a grindstone to sharpen your wits on; or in other words, as a punching-bag, on which to exercise yourself in preparation for greater conquests."

"Now, there you go again—always ready for a fight. Have you forgotten our mutual resolve of last Wednesday evening?"

"Oh, excuse me, we did declare a truce, didn't we? But let me correct you—as I remember, it was nearly one o'clock Thursday morning."

"It wasn't either—I should never sit up with a young man so late."

"Perhaps you are more or less right, after all; for certainly an hour was consumed standing, in bidding you good night in the hallway."

"Oh, did it seem so long to you?"

"Well, if it did, I should like to have a few more such long hours to look forward to."

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"Yes, and when I went into the rooms, mamma was awake, and remarked that my hair was a sight!"

"Don't blame me; I couldn't help it—I'm no hair dresser."

"No, but you're quite a success as a hair-musser."

- At length she said: "Bob, do you remember your early July promise?"

"I do—remember it very well."

"Don't you think I've waited long enough now?"

The moment I reverted to the time when I first saw her, and then back to that night following my injury in the sidewalk scuffle, I shuddered, and a feeling of depression came over me. It seemed like a sudden awakening from those happy summer days, with scarcely a thought of the past.

After a short stillness, such as often falls between lovers, I said: "Now that I am going away, Ella, do you ask me this merely to satisfy an idle curiosity, or because you really care?"

"Naturally, you must know I care a great deal," she said.

"If I should tell you that it would require a long, painful explanation on the eve of my departure, wouldn't you grant me an extension?"

"Yes, Bob, of course."

"I could have told you a day, or even a week, after I met you, when we were mere friends, but

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somehow things seem so different now—I can't quite explain my feelings."

I looked up and she turned her face quickly away. After a moment she turned, and looking me full in the face, with a half-frightened stare in her eyes, she said: "You seem so sad, and talk so strangely—you almost frighten me. I'm sure there must be some secret in your life."

I leaned over and kissed her lips, and as she placed her arms gently about my neck, she said, with an air of composure: "Bob, you must break yourself of this kissing habit before you go back to Omaha."

Half an hour later we parted in the hall, and I spent most of the remainder of the night thinking over the events of the past few weeks, and trying to convince myself that it was only my loss of appetite of late that made me feel so queer and light-headed.

Next morning Ella rode to the station with me, and when I bade her good-by, and got aboard the train I thought I was sick; and verily I was—love-sick! I have had malarial fever, sea-sickness, and other weakening complaints, but all of them combined couldn't compare with the feeling that came suddenly upon me at the parting moment. If I could have broken out, as with a case of measles or smallpox, I might have got better; but everything I took, or thought, or did, seemed to drive my infection in deeper.

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They refer to the heart as the seat of love; but it's all a figure of speech—I had it all over—head, heart, stomach and feet. My head ached and I felt dizzy; my appetite failed me; my knees felt shaky, and my feet didn't seem to track when I walked. I appeared to be all afire inside. It was to me the happiest, and yet in many ways the most disagreeable feeling that I could think of; and the man who never passed through it can no more imagine the sensations than he can imagine the nationality of the man in the moon.

The worst of it was, I felt like a marked individual, and thought everybody must know what was the matter with me. I wrote three red hot love-letters and mailed them enroute before I got to Omaha, without reading one of them over.

Upon arriving at Omaha, I went abstractedly to the post office and was disappointed not to find a letter from Her. Then I remembered telling her to write to the Millard, and I hurried there. The clerk handed me several letters—mostly bills and circulars—but the one I wanted was not among them. Four painfully long days passed, and no letter!

Instead of reading law I paced to and fro in the office like a caged lion, and if I tried to read I could get no sense of what I was reading. I tried Criminal Jurisprudence, Divorce Cases, Cooley on Torts, and the like, but they all read alike—I could see nothing but love and Ella in every page and every line. By the most remarkable coincidence I found

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a divorce case in which a girl by the name of Ella had figured as the co-respondent.

I felt as if I could have written a love story that would have startled the world—but fortunately I didn't. I told my law preceptor the circumstances and that there was no use in my trying to study law or anything else until I got this thing out of my system. He laughed himself almost sick, but I was in no condition to joke; and becoming disgusted with his manifest levity I put on my hat and went out. When I came back he was still laughing, and I suppose he laughs yet, every time he thinks of it. He told me that in time it would "wear off," as it had with him.

"Wear off!" I said—"how can it *wear off*, when you persist in rubbing it in?"

On the evening of the fifth day I received the long looked-for letter, but instead of an express package, as I expected, it was only a small envelope. I tore it open with trembling hands. It contained but a single sheet written on the first page, and began—"My dear Bob," etc. After acknowledging my three letters, she concluded with—"Hoping to hear from you again soon,—Sincerely yours—Ella Hewlett."

"*Sincerely yours*"—I repeated to myself—"Great Scott! she's grown terribly sincere all at once!" Then—"Ella *Hewlett*!" As if I didn't know her last name without her writing it out with such formal precision!

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While perhaps her letter was cordial enough, it was cold and passionless as compared with what I had expected. I read it over twice before I could believe it was for me, or that it was from the object of my blind idolatry. Then I looked at the envelope again to see if it was really addressed to me. It was for me all right—no mistake about that. As I passed out onto the sidewalk I said aloud—"Bah!" and tearing the note into little bits I threw it into the gutter.

"What a consummate ass I must have made of myself in those silly letters," I thought; "but she'll wait a long while before I write again!"

CHAPTER XXV

I MEET A YOUNG PHILOSOPHER, AND RECOVER MY NORMAL SENSES

AFTER thinking matters over in a rambling sort of way I became firmly convinced that Ella was really not in love with me at all but had been flirting with me merely as a summer pastime; and that my lack of experience and knowledge of women had led me into a foolish delusion. The more I thought of it the more I felt sure that she had made a fool of me, and I could imagine her amusement as she read those unconventional letters. I wished that I could get them back and burn them.

I walked up Farnam, as far as Sixteenth Street, and stood for a moment, debating as to where I should go. Then as I stumbled across the street in a careless, haphazard manner, I bumped against an elderly lady, and as I turned to apologize she glared at me furiously. Then her countenance softened and she said—"Poor drunken fool!" This

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stung me and brought me to my senses for an instant, but I made no reply.

I got onto a car, and was later awakened from my reveries by the conductor calling—"End of the route—all out!" Getting out, I looked about and found that I was in Hanscom Park.

While roving aimlessly about, watching the people strolling to and fro under the electric lights, and wondering every time I passed a young fellow if he had ever been through such an experience as I was having, I came upon a young man crawling along on the ground, and I saw that both his legs had been amputated—one above the knee, and the other a little below the knee joint. He had also lost his left hand. I followed slowly after him for perhaps twenty minutes or more, as he dragged himself along by unsteady jerks, and saw that he had lead pencils for sale; but during that time not one of the hundreds of passers-by paid any attention to him. Going up to him I said: "How's business, my good fellow?"

"Oh, it's pretty fair, sir,—I can't complain," said he, as he halted and peered up at me.

"What do you do in bad weather when you can't get out to work?"

"I stay at home, sir, and read books, and help my father."

"You have a home, then?"

"Yes, sir, we have a comfortable little room—my father and I."

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"Your father helps support you?"

"No, sir," he said as he looked smilingly up, "he's blind, so he's worse off than I am. He mends chairs, and in bad weather I help him; then at night I read to him."

"Then you help support him, I take it?"

"Yes, we put our earnings together and mine are usually more than his."

"Are the people generally kind to you, and do you find them generous?"

"Yes, they are usually kind. Sometimes I go all day without many persons noticing me, but other days I do better, and on the whole, I can't complain."

"How many pencils have you sold today?"

"Five is all I've sold."

"That doesn't any more than pay your carfare and lunch, does it?"

"Not very much, but my carfare is only ten cents, and my lunch costs nothing extra, for I bring along a little something in my pocket."

"It's pretty hard luck, isn't it," I said, "to be crippled like this, and have to earn your own living?"

He meditated for a moment; then—"Well, yes,—it is a little tough, but there are others worse off than I am," he said with a cheerful air.

"That's true," I said—"I observe that you are a philosopher. You have a cheerful disposition, which is something that neither money nor perfect physique can buy."

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"Yes, that's about all I have got, but I see lots of people that I wouldn't change places with."

"How long have you been crippled?"

"A little over ten years. I was run over by a train."

"And did you get any damages?"

"No, sir, they said it was my own carelessness—and I guess it was—though I couldn't help it."

"I hope you had a happy boyhood to look back upon," I said.

"Yes, we had a happy home. My father was a merchant in the furniture business, and he was the best father that ever lived. Two weeks after I graduated from high school my accident occurred, and my mother died from the shock. A year later my father met with business reverses and soon afterward lost his eyesight—"

Then steadying himself with his stub of an arm, and drawing his coat sleeve across his eyes, he looked up at me smilingly through his tears and continued—"But we are trying to make the best of it. I hope *you* have always been happy."

"No," I said, "the first fourteen years of my life were about as miserable as poverty and brutality combined could make them; and now that I have money and health, I am still unhappy at times."

"Why's that?"

"Because I have been silly enough to fall in love with a girl who doesn't seem to love me."

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This appeared to interest him; and rolling over on his back he sat up, and hung his head thoughtfully for a moment; then, as if speaking to himself—"She must be a fool."

"No," I said, "but I guess she thinks *I* am, and after thinking it over carefully I'm convinced that she's about right."

"Why so?"

"Why so? because a fellow should never lose his heart and his head in the same place; and certainly not at the same time. And that's just what I've done."

After looking me over searchingly, he said: "You look like an impulsive person, with an intense nature,—but not like one who would lose his head easily."

"So far as my temperament is concerned, you have judged pretty well; but in a few short days a woman can undo in a man what Nature has taken years to construct. She can make or ruin his happiness."

"Why don't you shake the girl and get another?"

"I don't need to shake her—she's already shaken me."

"You may be glad of it later on," he said,—
"things generally turn out for the best."

"Perhaps you're right. How do you sell your pencils?" I asked.

"Five cents each."

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"How many have you left?"

He counted them and found he had fifteen. Drawing a number of small coins from my trousers pocket I dropped them into his hand, saying: "I'll take the lot; but I'll ask you to keep them and sell them for my account, and give the proceeds to your father with my compliments."

Raising his hat, he said: "God bless you and reward you."

As I walked away and meditated over his distressful circumstances, and compared his lot with my own, I exclaimed within me—almost aloud—"O God! what a thoughtless, ungrateful fool I am—enjoying the best of health and spending for my meals and room alone nearly a hundred dollars a month, yet I have to come to this poor, wretched, half-starved vestige of a mortal being for a lesson in the philosophy of true happiness!"

I became much disgusted with myself for giving way so completely to my feelings, and resolved then and there to brace up and be a man.

I reasoned that She was not the only girl in the world, and that I knew half a dozen others in Omaha, just as attractive as Ella—"I've done my part," I argued, "and if she doesn't like me, she can go to—well, to Martin, if she likes. I'm young, and there's plenty of time and opportunity ahead—I'll not force my affections upon one who doesn't reciprocate—so that's the end of it. I'll just forget her."

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I suddenly awoke to the fact that this sort of nonsensical weakness was not consonant with my resolutions of former years, and I was allowing myself to drift along in an easy-going manner quite at variance with my earlier ambitions.

Having regained the mastery of my emotions, my face grew hot with resentment. I even forced myself to hope that Ella would not write again, so that I might forget her the more easily.

Thus I boarded a street car and returning to the hotel I smoked a cigar and meditated for some time over my law studies and the business prospects of the future.

Next morning on coming down to breakfast I found the following note:—

Dear Bob,—What have I done that would cause you to refuse to recognize me when you passed me on the street this evening? When did you get back? We still have a telephone in our house!

Yours, as ever,

SADIE.

“Sadie Carpenter!” I thought—the girl I used to take to the dances—the most popular figure in the ball room, and the one I liked best of all I had known in Omaha. I telephoned at once to her, and after we talked awhile she said: “You needn’t call on me if you don’t want to, because I have a new beau, and he might not like it.”

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"But I must see you," I persisted, "if only for a few minutes."

"All right, if you feel that way about it, come out any night this week, and I shall be delighted to see you."

I called to see her that evening, and thought her quite bewitching in her pink gown, which she said she had had made that summer, because I had most admired her in pink.

We passed the evening pleasantly, chatting about people and events of mutual interest, and the gayeties of the approaching season. Upon leaving I said: "How about this new fellow you speak of—will he monopolize you at all the dances this winter?"

"No, he doesn't dance."

"Does he like the theatre?"

"No."

"Does he take you riding or driving?"

"No."

"Does he play cards?"

"No."

"He must be a paragon—what *does* he do?"

"He goes to kindergarten—he's only six years old," she said. Thereupon I departed with a feeling of some relief.

Two days later I received a letter from Ella—this time from St. Louis—a little longer than the first—"I have not heard from you since you got home . . . I hope you are not sick—" and a few

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other formal declarations. I crammed it into my trousers pocket and didn't answer it. The next night I took Sadie to the theatre.

Three days later another—"My dearest Bob,—I have written you twice before, and received no answer Do you think you are treating me fairly? I'm terribly worried—you must be ill Your loving Ella,"—this time.

I had quite recovered my normal senses; but upon receipt of this, away they flew again, and I suffered a partial relapse.

"Yes," I answered, "I have really been sick—no mistake about that—and I'm not quite over it yet"; and so forth. I became so absorbed in writing what I had to say that I forgot to explain the nature of my declared illness; and on the second day a telegram came—"Are you any better? Please wire me at once how you are." I telegraphed—"I am out of danger. Have written."

Next day I got a letter of sixteen pages—"My own darling Bob," etc.—telling me how I *must be careful* of my health, and what *dreadful* dreams she had had about me. "*Please* don't study too hard," she wrote. It was, however, an unnecessary caution.

For the next ten weeks I studied law eight or nine hours a day, and during the rest of the time—when not sleeping—I was either puzzling out some imaginary hidden meaning between the

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lines in Ella's letters, or studying what I should write to her.

I attended some of the dancing parties of the Olivette Circle, but although the young people seemed glad to see me again, it did not seem like the old times of the winter and spring before. I occasionally went to the theatre, but that did not especially attract me now, for no attraction could be quite complete without Ella.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MUTUAL SURPRISE

IT was now late in November. I felt that I had read enough law to serve all practical business purposes, and having arrived at friendly terms with the president of the Trust Company where I kept my account, I arranged to start in to learn the business by accepting a low-salaried position, to begin the first of January.

Ella was soon to leave for California, and I wanted to go along; but was afraid she would think me babyish; so it seemed best not to go. Then I decided to go South for a month or so, until the time came to take up my new work.

I concluded, however, to stop off at St. Louis and surprise Ella before she left. One morning early in December I landed at the station in St. Louis, and drove out to her home. When I handed the maid my card she turned to go, but catching a glimpse of the name, she said: "Oh, yes, come right in"; and she ushered me into the reception room.

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Soon I heard the rustle of skirts on the stairs, and in a moment Ella appeared at the reception room door. Jumping up I advanced with smiling face and outstretched arms; but the reproachful look in her eyes repelled me, and I stopped short. That I had succeeded in my purpose to surprise her was a fact too plainly evident. But she was not half so much surprised as I was—at the cold reception she gave me. She barely extended her hand, and looking at me strangely, she demanded, with an air that I thought was decidedly imperious: “Why did you not write me that you were coming?”

I sank into the nearest chair as if struck by a thunderbolt, and gazed at her for perhaps a minute, during which she stood returning my look, and neither of us spoke. She looked both surprised and provoked.

At first my face grew hot; then it grew cold, and I felt faint from anger.

“What in the devil has come over her!” I thought. “Has she been fooling me all this time?”

Springing to my feet I said: “Very well, I’m sorry to have troubled you,” and I strode toward the door to leave the room. She took a step backward and as I approached she stretched both arms across the door-way. When I attempted to pass, her eyes relented, her lips parted, and her face suddenly lighted up in a joyful laugh. She

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laid her arms over my shoulders and offering her pink lips close to mine, she said softly: "Well, I guess not!"

An hour or so later her brother came home, and in greeting him I asked—"How are you, old man?"

"I'm not very well—I'm sick and disgusted."

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"I can tell you what the trouble is," Ella chimed in—"He's got a bad case of sea-sickness over Ethel Norton."

"Well, I don't see that you've got anything on me, Ella," he retorted; "you've been as love-sick as a turtle-dove these three months." Her face flushed and she walked away without a word.

Later Mrs. Hewlett remarked that she hoped I would be able to straighten her two children out and bring them to their senses, for they had both acted very queerly of late.

I took quarters at the Planters' Hotel, and spent a few days very pleasantly in St. Louis. The weather was unusually warm for that season of the year, and one evening as I strolled in the park with Ella near her home, we were discussing the events of the previous summer, and she told me that Miss Hildreth, a mutual acquaintance at the Springs, had just been married.

"Oh, that reminds me, Ella—to ask when *we* are going to get married?" We stopped abruptly and stood facing each other in the park.

"I didn't know that we were going to be mar-

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ried," she said, with the same chilly look that she had greeted me with on my arrival. "You're too young to get married. And, besides, I couldn't think of marrying you without—"

"Without knowing more about me, of course," I interrupted quickly. Then, with a sudden feeling of dizziness I turned away, and felt my eyes grow misty.

"Why, Bob! are you ill?" she asked.

"No; I'm sick."

Together we walked along in silence, each perhaps waiting for the other to speak, until presently we reached the front porch. Having recovered my composure, and feeling that in my impulsive haste I had presumed too much, I said: "No,—I don't suppose you would—marry me—without knowing more of my past. And if you knew more, you might be still less inclined. It was unfair in me to put such a question to you—it really escaped me in an unguarded moment—"

"*Bob!* then you didn't mean it?"

"No, I didn't—or yes, I did—that is, I meant it, but I didn't intend to ask you in just that way, and at this time. I'm always saying the right thing at just the wrong time, and—oh, I suppose I've got just what I deserve. I've worshipped the very thought of you ever since the day I saw you at the Springs eight years ago. The sad-faced little urchin that you used to watch from your window at the hotel was none other than Bob Hardwick in his

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wretched boyhood; and it was for your sake that I attacked those street ruffians when you screamed; it was the thought of you that comforted me when I lay there in that little attic room for two weeks with a great gash in my leg; and when you came with your mother to see me, you remember I burst out crying like a baby the instant I touched your soft little hand. Your face has haunted me from that day till now."

Her arms now hung limp at her sides, and she gazed at me with staring eyes and parted lips, as I continued: "When at the age of fourteen I discovered who and what I was—my mother's Virginia ancestry, and the inheritance that awaited me—then the thought of you came first in my mind. It was the hope of making myself worthy of you that fired my ambition during the next four years and kept me at my books day and night. It was the hope of meeting you again that made me go with Mr. Holliston back to the Springs; and then I found that you had gone to California. Then in hopes of catching a glimpse of you I went to California after Mr. Holliston's death. I followed on your trail from one place to another until I found that you had left for home; then I lost all interest in my travels and came east to Omaha. And the next summer when I wrote to St. Louis and learned you were at the Springs, I immediately went there to find you. When I got there the very thought of being so near you started

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my heart beating like someone was pounding me from inside."

She put up her hands imploringly and leaned against one of the large columns of the porch. The color had left her cheeks and she breathed heavily; but I was determined to be heard through, and went on:—

"Hundreds of times I have fought with my inner self against you and declared that I didn't love you—that I wouldn't love you; but it was simply no use. I tried to get interested in other girls, but your shadow was always cast before them. I was madly in love with you the instant I saw you last summer, and every minute since; but I wouldn't admit it even to myself, until it came time to leave you. Then under a hypnotic spell I wrote those silly letters on the train, which I have regretted a thousand times. Since then I've thought of nothing but you—you—always of you. I lost interest in my studies; lost my appetite; lost my head, and everything else, thinking of you. I couldn't sleep at night—I couldn't think in the daytime—of anything but you. I've always prided myself on having at least a thimbleful of brains, and a good deal of self-control; but I lost them all and made a fool of myself dreaming and hoping that you loved me. But never mind! Maybe I can forget how much I loved you,—now that you've set your heel on my heart and crushed it. Now you have my story. Good-by—forever."

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And turning quickly away I ran down the steps and toward the gate, leaving her standing as if petrified in speechless wonder.

But as I passed through the gate I heard her call to me, and instead of rushing madly away, as heroic lovers usually do, I was glad enough to return to the door, which now stood open. Taking me by the hand she led me inside, and stood facing me, with quivering lips and staring eyes.

"You foolish boy! Where were you going? I told you that you were too young to get married, and I meant it too," she said as she began unbuttoning my overcoat.

"If you had allowed me to finish, instead of hastily interrupting me and finishing my sentence for me in a thought that never even suggested itself to me, you would have spared yourself that needless speech—which I wouldn't have missed for the world. What I was trying to say," she said falteringly, "was that I couldn't think of marrying you without first being asked to do so; and that you—you—hadn't yet asked me,—don't you see?"

One day late in August sixteen years later, when touring with my family in an automobile through the White Mountains—we stopped over night at a large summer hotel; and after the evening meal, while sitting alone out on the veranda enjoying a cigar, my little twelve-year-old

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daughter Elsie¹ came up to me, and climbing up into my lap she said:

"Papa, I've come to keep you company—what are you thinking about?"

"I was just reminiscing. As you skipped about—the perfect image of mamma when she was your age—it reminded me of the first time I saw her on the veranda of a summer hotel, more than twenty years ago."

"Oh, yes, do tell me about it again. Let's have a nice cozy chat like we used to before the big fireplace at home. *Please* tell me a story, just for old times' sake."

"Bless your dear little heart, you've grown up to be so big that you know more stories than I do."

"Yes, but they're all about some old fairy, or king that existed—or didn't exist—a long time ago. I want to hear something real—something that happened in late years, or could happen now. Tell me something about yourself when you were a boy. It's so much more interesting to hear a story when you know it's true,—don't you think so?"

"Yes, but true stories are sometimes sad—"

"I don't care—" she interrupted, "if they are; I like'm all the better, because they make me appreciate my own happiness more. Oh, papa, you're so good and kind to us all, and sometimes I think it's awful that *your* childhood couldn't have

¹ See frontispiece portrait.

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been like Bobby's and mine—you've made us all so happy. Just think of it! You know Bobby and I have never been punished in all our lives!—though *I've* needed it lots and lots of times."

"No you haven't either. I can think of no word or act in your whole life that ever caused me the slightest pain or regret. You've been a perpetual joy since the day you were born. Even as a little baby, you scarcely ever cried; when you were hungry you always grunted, instead of crying, as babies usually do."

"Oh, it's so nice of you, papa, to say that; and I hope I'll always seem the same to you. It makes me so happy to feel that I can make you happy."

"In that you have succeeded wonderfully, and the last twelve years have been happier than my childhood days were miserable. I have surely tasted the bitterest and the sweetest that there could be in life."

"Yes, papa-dear, and now it's so nice that the bitter part is all over, and the sweets came last—just like the dessert at dinner."

